

Proceedings of the
**Cantors
Assembly**
54th Annual
Convention

Nevele Grande Resort
and
Country Club
May 6-10, 2001
13-17 IYAR 5761



2001

A CANTORIAL ODYSSEY

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July 1, 2000 ~ June 30, 2001

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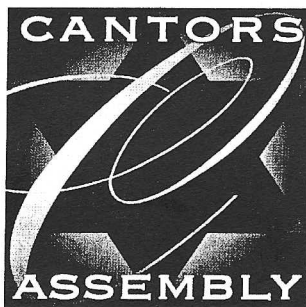
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*Deceased

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Cantors Assembly Convention**

May 6 ~ 10, 2001 ■ 13-17 IYAR 5761

Nevele Grande Resort and Country Club, Ellenville, NY



Edited by
Joseph A. Levine

Cantors Assembly
Jewish Theological Seminary
3080 Broadway, New York, NY 10027-4649

Convention Committes

Planning:

Hazzanim Sheldon M. Levin, Mitchell Martin and Laurie Rimland Bonn, Chairs
Hazzanim Chaim Najman, Stephen J. Stein, Abraham B. Shapiro,
Jack Chomsky, Jacob Ben Zion Mendelson, Robert Scherr and Steven Stoehr

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Steven Levin, David Lipp and Gregory Yaroslow

Accompanists

Tova Morcos-Kliger and Joyce Rosenzweig
Assisted by Cynthia Shaw and Hazzan Morton Shames

Hazzanim Rebecca Carmi and Richard Wolberg, Vocal Coaching Coordinators

We gratefully acknowledge the following colleagues who have given of their talents to coach students during the convention:

Hazzanim Lawrence Avery, Roslyn Barak, Louis Danto, David Feuer, Nathan Lam,
David Lefkowitz, Benjamin Maissner, Jacob Ben Zion Mendelson, Alberto Mizrahi,
Charles Osborne, David Propis, Faith Steinsnyder, and Moshe Taubè

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Cantors Assembly

Jewish Theological Seminary of America

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SUNDAY, MAY 6, 2001

1:00pm – 6:00pm	Registration	Hotel Atrium
1:00pm - 11:30pm	Vendors	Festival Room
3:45pm	Future Leaders Conference	Empire I
Chair: <i>Hazzan Jeremy Lipton</i> , Los Angeles, CA		
Participants include: <i>Hazzanim Abraham B. Shapiro</i> , Lynbrook, NY and <i>Stephen J. Stein</i> , Akron, OH		
6:00pm		Empire II-III
זמרה: <i>Hazzan Mark Kula</i> , Miami, FL		
מזמור: <i>Hazzan Mark Goldman</i> , Plantation, FL		
7:00pm	Dinner	Globe Dining Room
Chair: <i>Hazzan Laurie Rimland Bonn</i> , Reading, PA		
Havah Nashir-Israeli Songs: <i>Hazzan Shimon Gewirtz</i> , St. Petersburg, FL		
Birkat Hamazon: <i>Hazzan Gregory Yaroslow</i> , San Bernardino, CA		
9:00pm	First Annual Cantors Assembly Awards	Stardust Nightclub
Chair: <i>Hazzan Jack Chomsky</i> , Columbus, OH		
Presenters: <i>Hazzanim Kimberley Komrad</i> , Reistertown, MD; <i>Richard Wolberg</i> , Fall River, MA; <i>Lance Tapper</i> , Palm Desert, CA; <i>William Lieberman</i> , Weston, FL; and <i>Jack Chomsky</i> .		
9:30pm	Concert of 19th Century Jewish Music	Stardust Nightclub
Producer: <i>Hazzan Nancy Abramson</i> , New York, NY		
The Zamir Chorale of New York, <i>Mati Lazar</i> , conductor		
The Chorale of the H. L. Miller Cantorial School, <i>Hazzan JoAnn Rice</i> , conductor		
<i>Hazzanim Nancy Abramson</i> , New York, NY; <i>Moshe Bear</i> , Melville, NY; <i>Steven Berke</i> , Bellaire, TX;		
<i>Adam Frei</i> , Forest Hills, NY; <i>Charles Osborne</i> , Newton Centre, MA; <i>Henry Rosenblum</i> , New York, NY;		
<i>Shayna Smith</i> , New York, NY; <i>Scott Sokol</i> , Brookline, MA; <i>Steven Stoehr</i> , Northbrook, IL and		
<i>Lance Tapper</i> , Palm Desert, CA		
11:30pm	Comedy Program	Safari Lounge
Starring: <i>Cantor Kenny Ellis</i> , Agoura Hills, CA		

MONDAY, MAY 7, 2001

7:00am	שחרית	
Traditional-Egalitarian Service		Empire II-III
Gabbai: <i>Hazzanim Daniel Green and Ruth Katz Green</i> , Jackson, NJ		
בעל שחרית: <i>Hazzan Howard Dardashti</i> , Cherry Hill, NJ		
Introducing solutions for congregational tunes with proper Nusah		
קריאת בעל: <i>Hazzan Sharon Wallach</i> , Reisterstown, MD		
Traditional Service		Embassy Room
Gabbai: <i>Hazzan Sam Weiss</i> , Paramus, NJ		
בעל שחרית: <i>Hazzan Sam Weiss</i> , Paramus, NJ		
קריאת בעל: <i>Hazzan Alan Sokoloff</i> , Mamaroneck, NY		
7:45am	D'var Torah:	Empire II-III
<i>Dr. Saul Wachs</i> , Professor of Liturgy, Gratz College, Philadelphia, PA		
8:00am	Breakfast	Globe Dining Room
9:00am - 11:30pm	Business Center is available for computer needs	Business Center
9:00am - 11:30pm	Vendor Displays	Festival Room
9:00am		
Education Committee Meeting		Empire I
Membership Committee Meeting		Embassy Room
Placement Committee Meeting		Congressional I
Tikkun Olam Committee Meeting		Congressional II
10:15am	Concurrent Sessions	
A. How To Get A Position		Empire I
<i>Hazzan Morton Shames</i> , Springfield, MA		
B. How To Keep A Position		Congressional I
<i>Hazzanim Robert Scherr</i> , Natick, MA and <i>Richard Wolberg</i> , Fall River, MA		
C. Spirituality: The Role of the Hazzan		Golden Gate
<i>Dr. Saul Wachs</i> , Professor of Liturgy, Gratz College, Philadelphia, PA		
11:30am	Concurrent Study Sessions	
A. Alexander Technique		Indoor Pool Area
Presenter: <i>Kim Jessor</i> , Chair: <i>Hazzan Rebecca Carmi</i> , Brooklyn, NY		
B. Advanced Choral Conducting		Empire I
Presenter: <i>Dr. Joshua Jacobson</i> , Chair: <i>Hazzan Scott Sokol</i> , Brookline, MA		
C. Computers for Cantors		Tower Board Room
Presenters: <i>Hazzanim Mark Biddelman</i> , Woodcliff Lake, NJ and <i>Mitchell Martin</i> , Dix Hills, NY		
D. Effective Chaplaincy		Congressional I
Presenter: <i>Hazzan Alan Edwards</i> , Wallingford, PA		
Chair: <i>Hazzan Eliot Joel Portner</i> , St. Louis, MO		
E. Ba'al Tefillah Institute		Golden Gate Auditorium
<i>Hazzan Pinchas Spiro</i> , Des Moines, IA		
1:00pm	Lunch	Globe Dining Room
Lunch for Hazzan/Educational Directors		Executive Dining Room
2:00pm	Recruitment Meeting	Presidential Room

MONDAY, MAY 7, 2001 *(continued)*

- 2:30pm** **One Shabbat Morning** **Empire II-III**
 Samples of a new Shabbat Morning Service with Instruments
Craig Taubman 'N Company with Hazzanim Roslyn Barak, San Francisco, CA; Ira Bigeleisen, Valley Village, CA and Alberto Mizrahi, Chicago, IL
- 3:15pm** **The Future of American Synagogue Music** **Empire II-III**
 Open discussion facilitated by *Hazzan Henry Rosenblum, Dean of the H. L. Miller Cantorial School, New York, NY*
- 4:00pm** **The Life and Music of Israel Alter** **Stardust Nightclub**
 Chair: *Hazzan Benjamin Maissner, Toronto, ONT*
 with *Hazzanim Israel Goldstein, Jericho, NY; Benjamin Maissner, Toronto, ONT; Jacob Ben Zion Mendelson, White Plains, NY* and guest speaker: *Akiva Zimmerman, Tel Aviv, Israel*
- 5:15pm** **Free Time**
- 6:00pm** **Empire II-III**
 זמרה: *Hazzan Gary Zener, Greenacres, FL*
 מלצרי"ב: *Hazzan Faith Steinsnyder, Spring Valley, NY*
 Debut of a new service arranged by *Hazzan Jacob Ben Zion Mendelson*
Holocaust Memorial: *Hazzan Louis Danto, Toronto, ONT*
- 7:00pm** **Dinner** **Globe Dining Room**
 Chair: *Hazzan Mitchell Martin, Dix Hills, NY*
 Presentation of Kavod Award to Ida Meisels: *Hazzan Ivan Perlman, Boca Raton, FL*
 Presentation of Kavod Award to Roy D. Smith: *Hazzan Stephen J. Stein, Akron, OH*
 Presentations of Completed Scholarships: *Hazzan Abraham B. Shapiro, Lynbrook, NY*
Hava Nashir-The Music of Ida Meisels: *Hazzanim of the Florida Region*
Birkat Hamazon: *Hazzan Kurt Silbermann, Englewood, NJ*
- 9:30pm** **Concert of 20th Century Jewish Music** **Stardust Nightclub**
 Producer: *Hazzan David Propis, Houston, TX*
 Chorus: *New Jersey Cantors Concert Ensemble*
 Conductors: *Hazzanim Mark Biddelman, Woodcliff Lake, NJ; Arthur Katlin, Lawrenceville, NJ; Sheldon M. Levin, Metuchen, NJ and Erica Lippitz, South Orange, NJ*
 Soloists include: *Hazzanim Emil Berkowitz, Omaha, NE; Mark Biddelman, Woodcliff Lake, NJ; Michelle Freedman, Ridgewood, NJ; Sara Geffen Geller, Swampscott, MA; Deborah Katchko, Ridgefield, CT; Arthur Katlin, Lawrenceville, NJ; Janet Roth Krupnick, Summit, NJ; Ilan Mamber, Wyckoff, NJ; Elliot Joel Portner, St. Louis, MO; David Propis, Houston, TX; Murray Simon, Princeton, NJ; Israel Singer, Englewood, NJ; Ramon Tasat, Silver Spring, MD and Yitzhak Zherebker, Dallas, TX*
- 11:30pm** **Promenade Concert** **Safari Lounge**
 Producer: *Hazzan Hershel Fox, Encino, CA*

TUESDAY, MAY 8, 2001

7:00am

שחרית

Traditional-Egalitarian Service

Empire II-III

Gabbai: *Hazzanim Daniel Green and Ruth Katz Green, Jackson, NJ*

בעל שחרית: *Hazzan Jacob Ben Zion Mendelson, White Plains, NY*

Introducing a new Weekday Shacharit Service soon to be published by the Cantors Assembly
Traditional Service

Embassy Room

Gabbai: *Hazzan Sam Weiss, Paramus, NJ*

בעל שחרית: *Hazzan Sam Weiss, Paramus, NJ*

7:45am

D'var Tefillah:

Empire II-III

Hazzan/Dr. Joseph Levine, Philadelphia, PA

8:00am

Breakfast

Globe Dining Room

Regional Chairs Breakfast

Executive Dining Room

9:00am - 11:30pm

Business Center is available for computer needs

Business Center

9:00am - 11:30pm

Vendor Displays

Festival Room

9:00am

Concurrent Study Sessions

See Monday at 11:30am for more details

A. Alexander Technique

Indoor Pool Area

B. Advanced Choral Conducting

Empire I

C. Computers for Cantors

Tower Board Room

D. Effective Chaplaincy

Congressional I

E. Ba'al Tefillah Institute

Golden Gate Auditorium

10:15 am

54th Annual Meeting

Empire II-III

(closed session for members and spouses only)

Presiding: *Hazzan Chaim Najman, Southfield, MI, President*

Memorial to Departed Colleagues

הספד *Hazzan Robert Kieval, Rockville, MD*

הזכרה *Hazzan Simon Spiro, Montreal, QUE*

Induction of New Members: *Hazzan Robert Kieval, Rockville, MD*

Presentation of Commissions: *Hazzan Abraham B. Shapiro, Lynbrook, NY*

Presentation to Retirees: *Hazzan Saul Hammerman, Baltimore, MD*

Review of Joint Retirement Plan: *Mrs. Nina Rone, New York, NY*

Remarks: *Hazzan Chaim Najman, Southfield, MI, President*

Report of the 2002 Convention: *Hazzanim Nancy Abramson, New York, NY; Robert Scherr, Natick, MA*

Financial Report: *Hazzan Jack Chomsky, Columbus, OH, Treasurer*

Report of Nominations Committee: *Hazzan Henry Rosenblum, New York, NY*

Annual Report of the Executive Vice-President: *Hazzan Stephen J. Stein, Akron OH*

Bringing Jews Together: The Cantor as Peacemaker

11:45 am

Empire II-III

Hazzan Samuel Rosenbaum ז"ל Memorial Award and Lecture

Presentation of the Award: *Hazzan Chaim Najman, President*

Response of the Awardee: *Hazzan Sholom Kalib, Farmington Hills, MI*

Introduction of Lecturer: *Hazzan Eugene Rosner, Wynnewood, PA*

Lecture: *Rabbi Chaim Potok: "Reading The Bible"*

1:00pm

Lunch

Globe Dining Room

CIAA Members Lunch

Executive Dining Room

TUESDAY, MAY 8, 2001 *(continued)*

2:30pm

Concurrent Master Classes

A. Master Class for Women

Golden Gate Auditorium

Chair: *Hazzan Diane Nathanson, Sarasota, FL*

Presenters: *Hazzanim Faith Steinsnyder, Spring Valley, NY and Alisa Pomerantz-Boro, San Diego, CA*

B. Master Class for Tenors

Empire II-III

Chair: *Hazzan Leon Lissek, Teaneck, NJ*

Presenters: *Hazzanim Louis Danto, Toronto, ONT and Moshe Taubé, Pittsburg, PA*

C. Master Class for Baritones and Basses

Solarium

Chair: *Hazzan Richard Wolberg, Fall River, MA*

Presenters: *Hazzanim David Feuer, Palm Beach, FL and Raphael Frieder, Great Neck, NY*

3:45pm

Concurrent Programs

A. Ta-amei Hamikrah

Dr. Joshua Jacobson

Empire I

Chair: *Hazzan Scott Sokol, Brookline, MA*

Learn how the signs help us understand the meaning of the Torah texts and other Biblical insights.

B. The Music of Aminadav Aloni

Stardust Nightclub

Director: *Tova Morcos-Kliger*

Hazzanim Roslyn Barak, San Francisco, CA; Ira Bigeleisen, Sherman Oaks, CA; Hershel Fox, Encino, CA; Raphael Frieder, Great Neck, NY; Joseph Gole, Los Angeles, CA; Mimi Haselkorn, Temple City, CA; Nathan Lam, Los Angeles, CA; Steven Levin, Vancouver, BC

5:00pm

Free Time

5:45pm

Empire II-III

מנוחה: *Hazzan Deborah Katchko, Ridgefield, CT*

מזמור: *Hazzan Robert Scherr, Natick, MA*

D'var Torah: *Rabbi Gerald L. Zelizer, Metuchen, NJ*

Installation of Officers: *Hazzan Nathan Lam, Los Angeles, CA*

Birkat Cohanim: *Hazzan Isaac Wall, Ventnor, NJ*

Response: *Hazzan Sheldon M. Levin, Metuchen, NJ*

7:15pm

Dinner

Globe Dining Room

Chair: *Hazzan Henry Rosenblum, New York, NY*

Presentation of Yuval Award to *Hazzan Kurt Silbermann: Hazzan Abraham B. Shapiro, Lynbrook, NY*

Presentation of Yuval Award to *Hazzan David Lefkowitz: Hazzan Joseph Gole, Los Angeles, CA*

Hava Nashir-Yiddish Songs: *Hazzan Errol Helfman, Birmingham, AL*

Birkat Hamazon: *Hazzan Judith Naimark, Wilmington, DE*

9:30pm

In The Family Concert

Stardust Nightclub

Producer: *Hazzan Stephen Stoehr, Northbrook, IL*

Hazzanim Howard Dardashti, Cherry Hill, NJ; Farid Dardashti, New Rochelle, NY; Adam Goldstein, East Rockaway, NY; Paul Goldstein, North Miami, FL; Mark Kula, Miami, FL; Morton Kula, Boca Raton, FL; Chaim Najman, Southfield, MI; Daniel Najman, New York, NY; Ivan Perlman, Boca Raton, FL; Emanuel Perlman, Baltimore, MD; Joshua Perlman, Rockville, MD; Alisa Pomerantz-Boro, San Diego, CA and members of their families

11:00pm

Regional Receptions

Western Region

New Jersey Region

New York Metro Region

Congressional I
Tower VIP Room
Embassy Room

Midnight

Promenade Concert

Safari Lounge

Producer: *Hazzan Chaim Frenkel, Pacific Palisades, CA*

WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 2001

7:00am	שחרית	
Traditional-Egalitarian Service		Empire II-III
Gabbai: <i>Hazzanim Daniel Green and Ruth Katz Green</i> , Jackson, NJ		
בעל שחרית: <i>Hazzan Frank Lanzkron-Tamirazo</i> , Cranford, NJ		
Traditional Service		Embassy Room
Gabbai: <i>Hazzan Sam Weiss</i> , Paramus, NJ		
בעל שחרית: <i>Hazzan Sam Weiss</i> , Paramus, NJ		
7:45am	D'var Tefillah	Empire II-III
<i>Hazzan Abraham Lubin</i> , Bethesda, MD		
8:00am	Breakfast	Globe Dining Room
	Officers Breakfast	Executive Dining Room
9:00am - 11:30pm	Business Center is available for computer needs	Business Center
9:00am - 11:30pm	Vendor Displays	Festival Room
9:00am	Concurrent Study Sessions	
See Monday at 11:30am for more details		
A. Alexander Technique		Indoor Pool Area
B. Advanced Choral Conducting		Empire I
C. Computers for Cantors		Tower Board Room
D. Effective Chaplaincy		Congressional I
E. Ba'al Tefillah Institute		Golden Gate Auditorium
10:30am	Concurrent Discussion Sessions	
A. Panel Discussion: <i>Hazzanim As Community Leaders</i>		Empire II-III
Chair: <i>Hazzan Mitchell Martin</i> , Dix Hills, NY		
Panelists include: <i>Hazzanim Jack Chomsky</i> , Columbus, OH; and <i>Mark Kula</i> , Miami, FL		
B. Issues for Women Cantors (for women only)		Empire I
An opportunity for women to plan for future sessions of our conventions, to discuss issues that especially face women cantors and to seek ways the Cantors Assembly can help meet the needs of our women members.		
Chair: <i>Hazzan Janet Roth Krupnick</i> , Summit, NJ		
Panelists: <i>Hazzanim Marla Barugel</i> , Rumson, NJ; <i>Deborah Katchko</i> , Ridgefield, CT; <i>Erica Lippitz</i> , South Orange, NJ; <i>Judith Naimark</i> , Wilmington, DE and <i>Linda Shivers</i> , Portland, OR		
11:45am	Panel Discussion	Empire II-III
Cantors And Educators Working Together to Teach Future Generations		
Chair: <i>Hazzan Jack Chomsky</i> , Columbus, OH		
Panelists include: <i>Dr. Robert Abramson</i> , United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Educational Department Director and Director of Solomon Schechter Day School Association; <i>Dr. Sheldon Dorph</i> , Director of the Ramah Camps; <i>Dr. Eliot Spack</i> , Executive Director of CAJE, The Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education; and <i>Hazzanim Carol Chesler</i> , Huntington, NY and <i>Jeffrey Myers</i> , Massapequa, NY		
1:00pm	Lunch	
Regions will meet in different parts of the Globe and Executive Dining Rooms		
2:15pm	מנחה	Empire II-III
<i>Hazzan Richard M. Berlin</i> , Johnstown, PA		

WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 2001 *(continued)*

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|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2:30pm | New Music | Empire II-III |
| Read-through new publications for Hazzanin and/or choir. Publishers include the Cantors Assembly, Transcontinental Music and others. <i>(please sit by voice part)</i> | | |
| Conductors include: Hazzanin Joel Caplan, Caldwell, NJ; Gerald Cohen, Scarsdale, NY; Sheldon M. Levin, Metuchen, NJ; Erica Lippitz, South Orange, NJ; Benjamin Maissner, Toronto, ONT and Charles Osborne, Newton Centre, MA | | |
| Soloists: Hazzanin Moshe Bear, Melville, NY; Norman Brody, West Palm Beach, FL; Kenneth Cohen, Greenwich, CT; Perry Fine, South Orange, NJ; Deborah Katchko, Ridgefield, CT; Arthur Katlin, Lawrenceville, NJ; David Lipp, Louisville, KY; Alan Sokoloff, Mamaroneck, NY; Arlyne Unger, Erdenheim, PA and Gregory Yaroslow, San Bernardino, CA | | |
| 3:45pm | Hazzanin With Instruments | Stardust Nightclub |
| Chair: Hazzan David Silverstein, San Antonio, TX | | |
| Hazzanin Aaron Bensoussan, North York, ONT and Alberto Mizrahi, Chicago, IL and Sons Of Sepharad perform several Sepharadic favorites. | | |
| Hazzan David Propis, Houston, TX; Allan Naplan and friends perform highlights of their lively Friday Night Chai! | | |
| 5:15pm | Free Time | |
| 6:15pm | Cocktail Reception | Solarium |
| 7:00pm | Dinner | Globe Dining Room |
| Chair: Hazzan Sheldon M. Levin, Metuchen, NJ | | |
| Hava Nashir-Contemporary Songs: Hazzan Mimi Haselkorn, Temple City, CA | | |
| Birkat Hamazon: Hazzan Lance Tapper, Palm Desert, CA | | |
| 9:00pm | מערב | Stardust Nightclub |
| Hazzan Gerald Cohen, Scarsdale, NY | | |
| Debut of a new service composed for this convention by Hazzan Gerald Cohen | | |
| 9:30pm | Concert of 21st Century Music | Stardust Nightclub |
| Producer: Hazzan Nathan Lam, Los Angeles, CA | | |
| Conductor: Hazzan David F. Tilman, Elkins Park, PA | | |
| Hazzanin Rita Glassman, San Francisco, CA; Joseph Gole, Los Angeles, CA; Thom King, Baltimore, MD; Kimberly Komrad, Havre De Grace, MD; Emanuel Perlman, Baltimore, MD; Robert Solomon, Brookline, MA and Sol Zim, Flushing, NY | | |
| Guest artists including Cantor Benjie-Ellen Schiller, Danny Maseng and friends, musicians and a professional choir. | | |
| 11:30pm | Promenade Concert | Safari Lounge |
| Producer: Hazzan Joseph Gole, Los Angeles, CA | | |

THURSDAY, MAY 10, 2001

7:00am	שחרית	
Traditional-Egalitarian Service		Tower Board Room
Gabbaim: <i>Hazzanim Daniel Green and Ruth Katz Green, Jackson, NJ</i>		
בעלת שחרית: <i>Hazzan Caitlin Bromberg, El Paso, TX</i>		
בעל קריאה: <i>Hazzan G. Michael Horwitz, Omaha, NE</i>		
Traditional Service		Embassy Room
Gabbai: <i>Hazzan Sam Weiss, Paramus, NJ</i>		
בעל שחרית: <i>Hazzan Sam Weiss, Paramus, NJ</i>		
בעל קריאה: <i>Hazzan Alan Sokoloff, Mamaroneck, NY</i>		
7:45am	D'var Tefillah	Tower Board Room
<i>Hazzan Sam Weiss, Paramus, NJ</i>		
8:00am	Breakfast Ex-Officio and Officers	Globe Dining Room Executive Dining Room
9:30am	Executive Council Meeting	Tower Board Room
11:00am	Officers Meeting	Executive Dining Room
1:00pm	Lunch	Globe Dining Room

Statement on Future Leaders

Hazzan Stephen J. Stein, Akron, OH

I am optimistic. I think that congregations are hungry for talented, creative, energetic cantors. Study projects such as synagogue 2000, that are involved with the future of the synagogue, have all concurred that music plays a key role in the ongoing viability of a congregation. Will the function of the cantor continue to evolve? Absolutely! Will the style and sound of synagogue music continue to change, reflecting what worshipers find appealing? Yes!

If you take a look at the most successful companies that have long histories, the reason they have stayed in business is that they have been able to adapt to the changing needs and desires of their consumers. I have always found McDonald's an excellent example of how to run a successful corporation. I know something about McDonald's because I worked there for extra cash while in college. It wasn't the worst job I ever had. I was probably the only person working at McDonald's who didn't eat the burgers. But, I used to be thin, and started putting on weight from the fish sandwiches, fries and milkshakes.

In the beginning, McDonald's menu was simple. There were burgers, fries, and drinks. That was about it, other than fish sandwiches. In time they added a breakfast menu. As people became health conscious, they introduced salads and chicken. In some locations, they also offer veggie burgers. The point is, they changed with the tastes of their consumers in order to stay on top of a very competitive market. Our worshipers are bright consumers. They may be Judaically ignorant, but they are well schooled in secular studies and worldly affairs. Everything in life changes and evolves, including the roles of rabbis and cantors.

Of course the role of the rabbi has changed, as well. How often does a Conservative rabbi get to teach a Talmud class or render a Halachic decision? Rabbis are not chosen today on the basis of their scholarship, they are judged more on the strength of their interpersonal skills and political savvy.

For those who are at least somewhat flexible, for those who are open minded, for those who can communicate well with others, for those who are able to blend the old with the new, in addition to being talented, there is a bright future in the Cantorate. Yes, that is a lot to ask of one person! There are those who will say that congregations no longer want or need cantors. That is not true! We still have many more good positions to fill than we have good people to fill them. There has been no decline in the number of congregations seeking full-time *hazzanim*. But, they want a cantor who possesses multiple skills, one who is very different from the cantors who may have been our role models.

The future of the Cantorate depends on all of us, you and me, recruiting the right kind of men and women for the profession. If the Miller Cantorial School attracts and graduates creative and talented cantors, I am confident we will be just fine. Rabbis will not kill our profession. Neither will laypersons, reports or changing musical tastes. What could break our profession would be our failure to recruit the quality men and women. As we look to the future, there are the areas I believe are most important to ensure our future.

The first area is **Recruitment** (A video committee chaired by Perry Fine is currently working on the college level with Hillel, university music departments and university Judaica departments. But remember, the best candidates for cantorial school are probably youngsters we have trained for Bnai Mitzvah.

The second area is **working with the media** to create a positive and accurate picture of the contemporary cantor, which is why we have engaged Schnur Associates. There were press releases sent all over the country about colleagues participating in this convention. There were press releases about the recipients of awards that will be presented over the next few days. There were advertisements taken out in Anglo-Jewish newspapers, encouraging laypersons to join us this week.

Finally, **improving rabbi/cantor and cantor/lay leadership relations**. I have ongoing conversations with Joel Meyers, Eliot Schoenberg and Jerome Epstein in New York every other week. We have made important strides, but still have a long way to go. Our relationships with the Rabbinical Assembly and United Synagogue are probably better than ever, but again, we know that we have a long way to go. Last week, an RA/CA liaison committee met for the first time by conference call. There are three representatives from each organization. Here are the primary topics I would like it to deal with:

Upgrading the description of the cantorial position as it now appears in the United Synagogue Resource Guide. Actually, the RA has been working on this for more than two years. They agree that the current description lacks something, but they have been unable to come up with wording that is acceptable to them, which would accomplish our goal.

I would like to have **written guidelines** that address how rabbis and cantors should work with one another.

I would like to establish **teams of rabbis and cantors** with successful track records of working well together, who could help resolve disputes between rabbis and cantors when they arise.

Do you agree with these priorities? Would you add or subtract from this list? Are you willing to stand up and be counted? Can we count on you to assume a leadership role and help us achieve our goals?

Acceptance of the Cantors Assembly Award

Hazzan Abraham B. Shapiro, Lynbrook, NY

A gifted poet of the Golden Age in Spain, Abraham ibn Ezra, defined human speech as the "interpreter between the heart of the speaker and the listeners" *halashon eino ela meilits bein haleiv uvein hashom'im*. My speech, I must admit, is a very poor interpreter of what fills my heart at this moment. No words that may come from my lips can adequately describe how grateful I am for this tribute of affection and honor you show me tonight.

I am doubly thankful, because much that was said was undeserved and also because even if it were deserved, I had no right to expect it. You may recall that when a *Kohein Gadol* entered the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur and (God forbid) failed to perform every detail of the Avodah ritual in prescribed fashion, his punishment was death. But if he did perform everything perfectly, he was awarded no special thanks or praise. That was what was expected of him. The same may be said of every *kohein hedyot*, of every lay person who is appointed to play a "priestly" or mediating role in an organization such as our Assembly of Cantors. If he fails in his function, if he does not perform everything that is expected of him, it is his fate to suffer the criticism of those who appointed him. But if he performs in faithful fashion the task he has assumed, he has no right to expect any special thanks or reward. That is his task, it is the reason why he assumed that particular *avodah* (with a small "a") in the first place. And it is the reason why I doubly appreciate the kind words that were spoken here tonight as well as those on this Award.

I am happy for yet another reason on this occasion. It offers me an opportunity that should be given every man who serves in public life: to thank God for the blessings that I enjoy. I am privileged to have the companion of my youth—my beloved helpmate and wife—Millie, here to share this honor with me. The Hebrew essayist Shalom Ber Maximon—writing on the wives of public men—uses this simile: the man may be compared to a soloist; the wife to an accompanist. Audiences generally pay attention only to the soloist, hardly giving any thought to the accompanist. And yet, let the accompanist play one false note and the soloist is undone. I am happy to publicly acknowledge my accompanist in life, Millie. If I have performed well it was due to her, for it was she who always gave me the right pitch and kept me in key. I also wish to thank our child-*ren*, who have always shown appreciation for the fine and the beautiful in Jewish life.

As for you, the family of the Cantors Assembly whom it has been my privilege to serve these many years, not even a Moses could administer the building of a sanctuary without his Bezalel and Oholi'av who gave of themselves wholeheartedly and devotedly for the completion of the holy work. If I have helped our elected officers to achieve anything worthwhile on behalf of this organization it is because I had the constant cooperation of former presidents like Moe Silverman, Sam Rosenbaum and Saul Meisels, all of blessed memory. I fear to mention the many others who provided inspired leadership, lest I inadvertently leave even one of them out.

Far be it from me to claim that I have in any way achieved breakthroughs of leadership by myself. No one recognizes my shortcomings in this respect more than I. But this—in all humility—I may rightly claim for myself: I did—and still do—set high ideals as my **personal** goal. I have striven toward them all my life, and with God's help

will continue to do so in the years ahead. My plea to you to you tonight is: help me to help you achieve the goals we all want for our professional organization, for our national movement and for our people everywhere. Thank you and God bless you.

Acceptance of the Samuel Rosenbaum Award **Dr. Sholom Kalib, Farmington Hills, MI**

It is surely a rare privilege in the life of an individual to be honored by one's colleagues. How much more so is this true of an award as distinguished as the Cantors Assembly's Samuel Rosenbaum Award for Scholarship and Creativity. As gratifying and rewarding as it is, it is at the same time a humbling experience, because no one is more keenly aware than I am of the many other eminent colleagues among us who would richly deserve this award. I am therefore more grateful than I can adequately express to the Awards Committee for having bestowed this very special honor upon me.

There is no cantor who has been active during the past half-century who is not directly indebted to Sam Rosenbaum professionally and personally for the multitude of benefits each of us has derived from the countless phases of his legendary leadership.

And upon receiving an award of the level given me this morning, I ask your indulgence to allow me to acknowledge the most prominent individuals in my life's development: to my parents of blessed memory who taught me first, especially my father who, through extraordinary patience and loving dedication, taught me the skills of note reading, as well as those of a *baal k'riah* and child *hazzan*, all between the ages of 8 and 12; to the two preeminent *hazzanim* of Chicago, the mentors of my teen and early-adult years, Todros Greenberg and Yehoshua Lind, *zichronam livrachah*; to my eminently distinguished teacher, Oswald Jonas, disciple of Heinrich Schenker; and to Miriam, mother of the late Max Janowski, without whose vocal instruction and stylistic approach to singing, it would have been impossible for me to have functioned as a *hazzan*.

I would surely be remiss if I did not acknowledge the scholarship awarded me in pursuit of my PhD at Northwestern University by the Cantors Assembly in 1967 through the efforts of Moses J. Silverman, whom I served as choral conductor for five years, and once again, Sam Rosenbaum.

In the preparation of my *magnum opus*, the five-volume set I have been working on for the past twenty years, entitled *The Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue*, I have been blessed with the loving support of numerous individuals and institutions, the most prominent of which I must mention on this occasion: the administration and Office of Research Development of Eastern Michigan University; Asher and Arlene Tilchin, who have been the guiding spirit in every phase of the furtherance of my project, as well as the late Dr. Milton Shiffman and our esteemed colleague, Larry Vieder of Farmington Hills, Michigan; the Cantors Assembly Foundation for its generous support and our distinguished colleague Chaim Najman for his extraordinary support of my work over the years; the *Agudath Ha-hazzanim* of Toronto and our eminent colleagues, Louis Danto and Eli Kirshblum for their continuous efforts in behalf of my work; and last but by no means least to my daughter,

Ruthie Eisenberg, and my cousin, Diane Stillman, for their tireless efforts in behalf of my project; and to my loving wife, Goldie, whose sacrifice and unswerving support have been the *sine qua non* of all my life's pursuits. I cannot conclude my acknowledgements without thanking the *Ribono Shel Olam* for the multitudes of blessings with which He has showered me, including of course the bringing about of all that I have described and which is transpiring this morning. Thank you very much.

Presentation of Yuval Awards

By Hazzan Stephen J. Stein, Akron, OH

To Hazzan Kurt Silbermann:

Kurt Silbermann has been an active member of the Cantors Assembly for over four decades, and has participated in numerous projects during that time. He sang in the Town Hall concert commemorating our Tenth Anniversary Celebration, and he spent a month in Israel with us at the First International Conference of Jewish Music. He served as President, and as Chairman of both the Placement and Membership committees for many years. When he retired as *Hazzan* of Temple Emanuel in Englewood, he volunteered to work in the national office at least once a week, helping out in every way possible. He is a true friend of the Assembly and its members, who in turn present him with this Yuval Award for selfless devotion to our sacred calling.

To Hazzan Errol Helfman:

Errol and Judy Helfman are being honored tonight upon the establishment of a Scholarship Fund in their name. Not only is Errol a fine *Hazzan* and a wonderful colleague who always cares and shares, but he is also a terrific fundraiser. The Scholarship's charter reads as follows. "Established by the members of Temple Beth El in Birmingham, Alabama to help provide financial aid to students preparing for the cantorate at the H. L. Miller cantorial School of the Jewish Theological Seminary, in honor of *Hazzan* Errol and Judy Helfman, and in recognition of their dedicated service to our congregation."

To Hazzan Gregory Yaroslow:

Those of you who have attended these conventions for years are well aware of the work that Greg Yaroslow has done as part of the Management Committee. You will also recall his late father Sam (*a"h*), who came year after year as an interested lay person. But he did not sit idly by. Sam Yaroslow would serve for hours at a time at the Registration Desk, helping to accommodate hundreds of delegates and other guests. Upon Sam's sudden and unexpected death, Greg and his sister Rita, along with their mother Marcia, established a Scholarship Fund in memory of their father and husband, "in appreciation of his concern for them and to commemorate his deep love of *Hazzanut* and the Cantors Assembly."

Presentation of Kavod Awards
By Hazzan Ivan Perlman, Boca Raton, FL

To Mrs. Ida Meisels:

More than half a century ago, a beautiful young woman came into our Executive meeting in New York with her husband—our beloved colleague and President at the time—Saul Meisels (z"l). Last January my wife Muriel and I had the privilege of attending that same young woman's 90th birthday in Florida. As you can all see, her age has changed, but Ida Meisels is still as beautiful as ever.

At her special party, since we were still counting votes from the November Presidential Election, I mentioned that we in the Cantors Assembly have always had a First Lady along with our Presidents. That is because when Saul's term of office ended, Ida remained as unofficial First Lady of the organization. In all the years since, she has continued to make her own unique contribution towards our good and welfare. And while our deeds as elected officers might ultimately be forgotten, Ida's contribution will remain, and she will take her place among the giants who have kept our sacred music alive. Besides accompanying, she has turned her talents to composing and arranging, and has made the fruits of her labor available to all of us. Who among us has not benefited from her lovely arrangements of Yiddish and Hebrew folksongs as well as her artistic settings of the liturgy?

Ida, we are the most fortunate of generations, for we have known and loved you personally. Future generations of the C. A. will have to content themselves with knowing and loving you through your lasting contributions to the *Hazzanic* repertoire. And so it is with great pleasure that I present this richly deserved award to you.

To Mr. Roy D. Smith:

As you looked through your Convention Program and noted that we were going to honor Roy Smith you may have wondered, "Who is Roy Smith?" For starters, without Roy Smith there would be no printed Convention Program! In fact there would have been no printed Convention Program for the last **several** years. Neither would there have been the beautiful brochures and commemorative plaques, along with all sorts of other printed materials that the Assembly has created in recent years.

Roy Smith is one of several wonderful gifts bequeathed to us by Sam Rosenbaum (z"l). As you have probably figured out by now, Roy is a professional printer, the proprietor of RDS Printing. But for us to honor him with a Kavod Award, you have also reckoned that our relationship with him is far more than a business association. He has been a friend and advisor. Every job that Roy takes on for us is prepared as if he were creating it for himself. Nothing is shipped to us until he has reviewed it with an eagle eye, and more than once. And so it is my privilege and pleasure to present him with this Kavod Award.

Devar Tefillah

**Dr. Joseph A. Levine, Liturgy Instructor,
Academy for Jewish Religion, NY**

Rabotai Ug'virotai, I have a confession to make. On mornings when I wake up late, in order to save time I recite the abridged Weekday Amidah, known by the first word of its middle section, beginning with blessing number four: *Havineinu*. But I do not *daven* the version given in *Siddur Sim Shalom*, which melts down a few of the Amidah's thirteen middle blessings into an unintelligible muddle. In his Code of Jewish Law—*Mishneh Torah*—Maimonides lists the shortened forms for blessings six and seven as follows.

Number six (which substitutes for the paragraph that opens with *Selach lanu, Avinu, ki chatanu*) is: *Lesolei'ach heyeh lanu* "May You be a forgiver toward us." Number seven (which substitutes for the paragraph that opens with *Re'eh na ve'onyeinu*) is: *Lih'yot ge'ulim* "May we be redeemed."

Siddur Sim Shalom combines both of these into one: *Vetislach lanu lih'yot ge'ulim*. At best, this is a difficult Hebrew formulation. It's attributed to Shmuel, who was head of the third-century Babylonian academy in Nehardea. Taken literally it means: "Forgive us to be redeemed; forgiveness and redemption are suddenly intertwined, and we have to ask why."

The best example of a "redemption"-type prayer is the one we all recited a few minutes ago, *Tsur Yisrael*, whose technical name when discussing liturgy is a *Geulah*, after its *chatimah*: *ga'al yisrael*. And the tune to which we sang it—led so beautifully by Hazzan Jack Mendelson—is the well known Young Israel tune that is now heard in synagogues all over the world. But is it a redemption-type melody, one that tone-paints the concept of God as our Redeemer? We would expect it to be in the mode of *Adonai Malach*: God, Who reigns over all creation and is also the sustaining Rock of Israel, will ultimately redeem His people.

So on the High Holy Days, this prayer should be sung in the mode or nusach of God's Kingship, which appears throughout the great authority Salomon Sulzer's *Schir Zion*. For example, Sulzer's settings of *Shofet Kol Ha'aretz*, *El Dar Bamarom* and *Kadosh Atah Venora Sh'mecha* all use the *Adonai Malach* mode. Therefore, we would expect Sulzer—who was such a stickler for preserving the Old Tunes—to open *Tsur Yisrael* on Rosh Hashanah in the same mode. But we would be disappointed in this expectation. Sulzer actually opened *Tsur Yisrael* in a mode that could easily have led into our Young Israel tune! In that case he would have been not in *Adonai Malach* but in a *Selichah* mode used when asking forgiveness.

Mention of the *Selichah* mode always brings to mind its quintessential occurrence in the liturgy: *Kol nidre ve'esarei, vacharamei vekonamei*—which, if carried to its logical musical conclusion—would lead us right into *ufedeh chin'umecha yehudah veyisrael* (of the *Tsur Yisrael* prayer). The affinities are self-evident. So what is the tune of *Kol Nidre* doing in *Shacharit*, accompanying a *Geulah* text? Here are two reasons, and I'm sure that many more can be found.

The first was suggested by the Maggid (preacher) of Koznetz who, when meditating on the meaning of *ga'al yisrael* each morning and evening would say the following aloud.

Ribono Shel Olam! Master of the Universe, I beg You
to redeem Israel. And if You do not want to do that,
then at the very least, Redeem the Gentiles!

This story hints at the possibility that Israel is as yet unworthy of *geulah*. It first has to undergo *teshuvah*, and that means—among other things—asking forgiveness; hence the *Selichah* mode.

The second reason has to do with the kind of Judaism we in North America practice. Scholars have called it the Judaism of Exile and Redemption: exile or national calamity (*chas veshalom!*) followed by redemption or national resurgence (*hal'vai!*). The Holocaust embodied the latest manifestation of "exile." The founding of Israel almost immediately thereafter represented "redemption." Jews on this side of the Atlantic could understand the analogy; it gave us an agenda: support for the re-established Jewish commonwealth. And as a bonus, it removed the cloud of guilt that had hung over our parents' generation, the feeling that very little had been done to prevent the slaughter.

This equation between exile-through-Holocaust and redemption-through-Israel is spelled out in a prayer that Conservative Jews recite on *Yom ha-Atzma'ut*, the English translation of *Al Hanisim* in the movement's *Daily Prayer Book*.

In the days of **destruction** six million of
our people were slain... scattered **remnants**
sought refuge in the **Land**... You, O Lord...
wrought **deliverance** to Your people Israel.

The Reform movement makes a similar connection during the Passover Seder. Its *New Union Haggadah* sets aside a Fifth Cup of Redemption with this sanctifying statement.

It is still dark as we pour this cup, but light
Dawns over Zion... passing... out of the
fiery furnace seared in body and soul,
reborn in self-**redemption**... the people
of **Israel lives!**

Reconstructionism flatly rejects the concept of supernatural miracles performed in our behalf. Yet its latest prayerbook—*Kol Haneshamah*—presents an excerpted memoir of Holocaust survivors who state the case in their own words.

June 3rd, 1945. Here we are, the first few
comrades, sitting on a truck that is taking us
from Buchenwald... from the barracks, the
watchtower, the S.S. quarters... we are...
determined to follow this road to a place of
our own... **to Palestine**.

While Orthodoxy believes that God did perform miracles for our ancestors in the days of *Yehudah ben Matityahu* (*ha-Makabi*) and also in the days of *Ester bat Avichayil* (*ha-Malkah*) it has yet to formulate a liturgy for the modern-day miracle of *Yom ha-Atzma'ut*. Nevertheless, an anthology of Halachic Reflection on the Holocaust does link our people's inestimable loss during that catastrophe with the euphoria engendered by Israel's unanticipated victory in its 1948-49 War of Independence. In it, several learned *rabbanim* imply the following correlation.

There is no radical reason why God permitted the Holocaust to take place...yet we must take consolation in the fact that **the six million who were martyred “gave” the Jewish people back its Land.**

No wonder we prefer hearing the mode of forgiveness in prayer that extol God as Redeemer! In a very real sense, the State of Israel redeemed not only the surviving European remnant but North American Jewry as well. That is why we are to be forgiven for overindulging our collective feeling of relief, even at the cost of lumping petition together with praise during prayer. Night and day we exclaim before the Creator:

Nora tehillot, oseh feleh

“who is like You, revered in praises.”

And how do we sing God’s praises? We wrap them in the white *kitl* of Yom Kippur Eve, in the same melody that the first great hazzanic authority of the twentieth-century—Aron Friedmann—used for the Selichah section’s invocation, *Ya’aleh*:

Veyeira’eh kippureinu ad arev

“Let our atonement come with nighfall.”

In effect, we are putting our hazzanic stamp of approval on the 3rd-century scholar Shmuel’s formulation—quoted in Siddur Sim Shalom—*Vetislach lanu lih’yot ge’ulim*, “Forgive us in order that we may merit redemption.” And that is a hope in which all of us can concur, *vechen yehi ratson, venomar: amen*.

How To Get a Position

Hazzan Morton Shames, Springfield, MA

All of us remember the comic Yiddish song *Hazzanim Oif Probeh* in which a number of cantorial candidates go to what was called an audition. The song satirizes the foolish responses offered by the so-called *mevinim*—the know-it-alls—in the community, the board of critics who were enlisted to put their own stamp of approval on the chosen candidate. I personally feel that the essence of the song is a put-down of *hazzanim*. The word *probeh* itself gives one a poor impression of what the audition process was like. Those who were running the auditions were ill-prepared to be in such a position, and the *hazzanim*—many of them really gifted—were not articulate enough or professional enough, nor did they have an organization like the Cantors Assembly to protect them from what was going on. Now, we've finally put a stop to this foolishness. Those seeking positions are met by boards stocked with intellectually sophisticated professionals who understand the process of engaging someone who will represent them on many levels. And our cantors, God bless them all, are educated, viable people—also quite sophisticated—who can easily take on the challenge of these formal interviews.

I find that the key word in the interview process for both the interviewer and the interviewee is: *accountability*. Each side has to be accountable for the ground rules, on which they both agree. As a candidate, try to remember throughout that the position of *hazzan* is a very special one. It's much different even than being a rabbi. The resume you send and the interview you undergo will be reviewed by business people looking for qualities deemed necessary in any specialized profession. Remember that today's *hazzan* is a many-faceted personality equipped for multiple synagogue and community responsibilities. The influence of the *hazzan* reaches out far from the pulpit. Your resume must reflect that, being careful to emphasize the portion of your skills that will most benefit the synagogue.

The fact is that today's candidate will be met by a bunch of professional people who don't know what a *hazzan* is, and the questions they ask reveal that they really don't understand what the position is all about. The truth is that they are business people, and they look for the same qualities that they might find in somebody who is interviewing for a computer job. They want the same kind of professionalism. They don't want to deal with anybody who isn't up to date in whatever they're doing. So they will look for those qualities. They might ask a few synagogue-related questions, but they don't know about music and they don't even know about the service itself. It will be mostly a chemical thing that will attract the interviewers to a particular interviewee.

Once you've been called for the interview you already have a foot in the door. In other words, once you've sent them your resume and they've read it and they've called you in, you are halfway there. I get complaints all the time from candidates who call me and say, "I haven't heard from any of the congregations that I sent my application to. What do you think is wrong?" I'll say, "Well, let's look at the resume you sent in. Let's see what you've got there." And that's why I'm stressing what a

resume should look like. Many of us aren't too quick to write a resume professionally – it's hard. It's not an easy thing to do and if you aren't capable of doing it, my suggestion is, get a professional to do it. It will be money well spent. Don't be afraid to call in somebody to do that for you. The synagogue has probably listened to a tape of yours, gotten some referrals, and they feel comfortable enough to see you as a possible candidate. Now comes the preparation for the interview. I'll go through some guidelines for the resume.

How many of you have already made up a resume? O.K. Then you probably know what they are. But there are other preparations for the interview. Many jobs are lost through lack of thoroughness in those preparations. Before the congregation has seen you they've put a great deal of work into what they're looking for: the description of the job, the starting salary. The candidate should also invest time before the interview. What does that mean? It means that you have to practice talking. You have to get ready for an interview. You just don't go in cold. You're going to be asked many questions. Get out of the habit of the wooden leg syndrome. What is the wooden leg syndrome? It's a very interesting thing. You'd be surprised how many people prepare themselves for failure. They convince themselves before they go on the job that they're not going to do well. And why is that? They find an excuse for failure (the wooden leg syndrome) such as, I'm too old...I'm too young...too experienced...too inexperienced...I'm overqualified...I'm underqualified...I'm a female...I'm a male. In other words, don't find excuses beforehand as to why you aren't going to get that job. It's a bad policy. Don't go in with a negative feeling because if you feel negative about yourself when you go into the interview, you'll come out that way. You may have a feeling about your voice. Don't make excuses for the way you sing that day, don't say I have a cold; it's not a good idea. Just sing, they're going to like you. Many of them clearly don't know what a good singer is. You'd be surprised how many people don't understand what singing is all about. I'm sure you've already discovered that. Remember, the interviewer has accepted you with whatever limitations you have. They've already seen your resume and they know what you're not capable of doing. So don't feel compelled to say anything negative about yourself. By the way, ladies and gentlemen, feel free to interrupt anything that I'm saying at this time.

Comment from the floor:

Our *shul* is currently interviewing rabbis, and I've noticed that the one who they recalled did research not only on the synagogue, but on the community. He knew everything, including how many Jews lived there. He had gotten on the Internet and thoroughly researched the city before he even came there. And then he made calls to each of us on staff to find out what was going on in the synagogue.

Hazzan Shames:

Smart move. I'm sure he made an impression. That's a very good thing to do. They'll like to hear that.

Question from the floor:

What's the protocol in talking to staff that are already there, to ask any questions about the history of the relationship between the *hazzan* and the congregation?

Hazzan Shames:

Well, you might call your colleague, the *hazzan*. What I find usually true is that the *hazzan* is leaving because he or she may not have had a good experience at the synagogue. So they're going to have a negative view of the synagogue. Remember, somebody might not succeed in a job, but the next person who comes in may succeed very well. So when you get an opinion from a colleague, even though it might be valuable to a certain degree, you have to weigh what that person is saying. Be especially careful concerning what he or she says about the congregation, things like "I have a terrible staff to work with... the board is stupid..."

Comment from the floor:

Before I came to my present position I had heard that some of the board members were corporate executives, and that when they came into the *shul* they left their brains at the office.

Hazzan Shames:

We've all heard that line before. I want to tell you, in any field you will find that people individually are pretty intelligent. When they get on a board something happens to them. They want to feel their power, they want to feel their strength. How many times have you heard at a board meeting—where nobody really listens—somebody saying the kids are really going to benefit from such and such an idea. And everybody says, great! They don't even know what's been proposed. As soon as they hear "kids", their reaction is positive. So, be careful who you call. If you have friends in the community, it might be better to call them, they might be a little more fair in what they're going to tell you.

What we find in placement—and this is very painful—is the rabbi network. It's a devastating thing. If you haven't done well at one position, for some reason the rabbi will always call the other rabbi, who will inevitably get a biased opinion. And that's a terrible thing. We try very hard, that's why we work with the United Synagogue on placement. They are part of the Placement Commission. If somebody keeps going out on interviews and for some reason they're not being hired and they smell something, we'll go to Rabbi Blumenfeld who sits in with us and say, "something is going on in that congregation, you've got to stop it." This individual has to earn a living, and for some reason is not succeeding. This is a very gifted person who should be getting a position. Somebody is saying something bad. So the United Synagogue will step in and try to be helpful. Sometimes they are, sometimes they're not.

Usually when people call, I'll try to be honest about the congregation and say, "look there are problems there, but I would give it a shot. You're looking for a position, give it a shot. You may do very well there if you know what the situation is."

Question from the floor:

Would you ask how many cantors have served that congregation in the last ten years?

Hazzan Shames:

Sure, that's a fair question to ask, either of the *hazzan* or of the board.

Follow-up question from the floor:

Would you ask why the incumbent is leaving?

Hazzan Shames:

I might not ask that. But getting back to your pre-interview preparation, talk to yourself. Have you ever had the experience of knowing what to say but you can't get it out of your mouth? You can alleviate some of that anxiety. Practice talking to yourself in front of a mirror. Just keep talking, imagine what they might ask you. Be prepared to spin out all the important information about yourself so that you don't stutter or stumble. Be positive in how you speak and what you say about yourself. Practice it. I know it sounds crazy, but it's a helpful thing to do.

Check the buzz. What does that mean? Each profession has its own buzzwords. And *hazzanut* is no different. The committee will want to know about your *congregational participation, educational techniques and behavioral patterns*. Your interviewers will want to hear that you're right on top of your profession, or on the cutting edge of new ideas. In other words, use those buzz words. They want to hear them even if they're not relevant to anything. I'm one to think that buzz words come and go and that they're really nonsense. But use them. How many times do you hear the word *spirituality* today? It's a lot of hogwash. I don't know anyone who knows what spirituality means. It's just something that sounds good, and so everybody's using the word. But there are buzz words within the cantorate that are important techniques—for *teaching our youth chorale, techniques for bringing music to a classroom*—they might ask you those kinds of things. They'll want to be assured that you know what's going on in your profession, that you're not narrow, and that you understand the totality of synagogue life, not just about the singing.

The interviewers usually have a list of structured questions which they're prepared to ask. Does the candidate have an adequately pleasing voice to capture people's attention? How intelligent is this person? What is this person's personality? Is it charismatic? What impact would that individual make on others? Is the candidate motivated? Does the candidate have the qualifications and the experience for the work required? They can tell this by a number of things you say. Show a bit of excitement in your interview. Don't just sit back and let them ask all the questions. You might offer something like, "I understand you have this going on in your congregation... I love teaching kids...do you have an adult choir, something I love to do...what about your adult education?" Ask the kind of questions that will prompt them to look at you and say this person really wants to come forward and roll up his sleeves and do some good work. It's important. On the other hand, I wouldn't emphasize that I am a concert singer. They don't really care. They want to hear what you will do *for their congregation*. They're not interested in hearing that you've done forty concerts over the last twelve months. It may imply that you have a good voice, but it's not going to be computed as anything that will help their synagogue.

Recently many committees have taken to assessing candidates psychologically, attempting to measure individual's abilities and traits. They try to gauge how one will respond in a problem-solving situation, and especially in a group situation. How many here would be upset if you were asked to take a psychological exam, and for what reason? I'm just curious.

Response from the floor:

I had a situation where, about five months into my present position, I was having some tension with the president. It's a long story, but in the middle of it they sent me to undergo psychological testing. Or they tried to, because of one woman on the board who works with a company that tests personnel, and they sent me the form she uses. My rabbi and assistant rabbi went ballistic over it because the truth of the matter is, there's no correct answer for those exams. Any type of information that you give can always be looked at from either a positive or a negative viewpoint. I refused to take it. And I don't think I would want to take it beforehand either.

Hazzan Shames:

So what you're saying is, they might peg you immediately as type A or type B. They will have established an opinion of you even before they've met you or you've had a chance to perform.

Comment from the floor:

That's right. No matter how positively you answered a particular question, they could analyze it and say, "he's the wrong person, he's not strong, but megalomaniacal." You can read those exams positively or negatively depending on how you want to read them. And I think that they're very dangerous to take because of that. There's no absolute, correct answer.

Hazzan Shames:

I hear what you're saying, and I agree. I think you've entered a great profession. First of all, anyone who enters the cantorate does it because they have a passion for it. They love the music, they love their singing and they're bringing a great treasure of gifts to their congregations. On the other hand, it's a very difficult position. Being a *hazzan* in a congregation is a tough one. Even though we talk about a *duel* clergy in the cantorate, it's a very bristly *duel* clergy. You have to deal with it all the time. If you are an accomplished *hazzan*, and have a magnificent voice, you get the word that it's too much like a concert. If you hold back, then it's not good enough to listen to. It's a no-win situation. But it's a wonderful profession. It can be very fulfilling, especially for families. Children of *hazzanim* are really a special group. They are just wonderful. The *hevruta* in the profession is just terrific. The criticism can be a little painful, but you don't give up. It's like being a musician of any kind. You have to love it with a great passion and want to bring that to your congregation. You're going to face this issue of psychological testing and overcome it.

When I came into the Cantors Institute I was the first applicant to the school, and I graduated with the first class. In those years, not everybody had to have completed college. Today, everybody comes to the H.L. Miller School with at least a

Bachelors degree. And you find a number of students who are in their 40s and 50s—who are attorneys, doctors and accountants—who suddenly come to the conclusion that this is what they really want to do. They want to be a *hazzan*. I think that it is a terrific profession. Even though all these things we're talking about are tough, just remember you've chosen the right path.

Question from the floor:

Where is the pressure coming from, for congregations to give these personality tests to begin with? Why are they so important all of a sudden?

Hazzan Shames:

I think what happens is that board members today come from big organizations like IBM, and this is the way they treat their newcomers. Remember what I said: even though you're auditioning for the cantor's position, they don't look at it as that. They look at it as though it's a corporate position.

So find some unique selling points. What skills or talents can I bring to this position, which others may not? Mention something special that you've done in another congregation, or come up with some thoughts of where you want to see this congregation's music program go. Very often you not only become the *hazzan*, but the music director as well. You are the Jewish music personality in your community. Just remember that. And you really have to keep up. If you think about it, rabbis also become involved in the larger community. They'll go to nursing associations, pastoral counseling, they'll do all kinds of things in the community. You have to do the same thing as a *hazzan*. You have to become active in the cultural life of your community. Try to get on the board of your symphony. Try to get on the board of the art museum. Be active, so that you are a known personality, so they see you as bringing a unique kind of personality that they are going to be proud of. Let them envision their *hazzan* on the board of *their* orchestra or as starting a music school in *their* community. Those kinds of things are really vital.

Question from the floor:

How do you become a board member of a local symphony?

Hazzan Shames:

You approach them. You call their president and you say you are a cantor and you are really interested in music and know that you can be helpful on their board. Approach a choral society the same way. I don't mean to be self-serving, but I'm on the board of the Springfield symphony, and my wife and I started a music school with twenty-five kids. We now have 900 students in the school. It's incredible. It's called Springfield Community Music School. By the way, it helps keep you from going crazy. You're not in *shul* all the time.

Comment from the floor:

It doesn't have to be limited to music or art. I'm on the board of five different cultural organizations, and I find the same people that are on one board are on another. They get to know you, and you have an identity in the community. These people are

actually the ones who run not only the secular community but also the non-secular community

Hazzan Shames:

All boards are looking for people all the time. Tell them what you can bring to them. Maybe you could serve on their educational committee. You implied that it needn't only be musical organizations. How about the Jewish Family Service, or Federation? You've all got a good brain, you're smart people. Most of you graduated from college, you have all the gifts one could possibly bring to an organization. Use them; don't only be at the synagogue. Be an equal to other staff members who may be out there doing the same sort of community service.

Back to the interview. You may be absolutely certain that the question you dreaded most will be asked. It's like Murphy's Law. Whatever terrible thing can happen is going to happen that day. Remember, no one is perfect for any job or matches the expectations in every respect. Above all, be honest about everything: relationships; money; qualifications. Don't lie about anything. If they ask you what your salary was on a certain job, tell them exactly. Don't pad it, because it will come back to haunt you, I tell you this honestly. I've had candidates lose their positions because of that. Because committees go out and check what candidates have told them. I could mention at least two people who lost their positions because they weren't honest about what they were paid in their last job. Be very careful about that.

Question from the floor:

Should you be up front about what you will do and what you won't do, or should you just give the answer they're looking for.

Hazzan Shames:

There are certain rules which govern the Cantors Assembly, and which congregations will expect you to comply with. They expect you to observe Shabbat, even though you may drive to shul. You have to be honest about that. Yet, I wouldn't say to them, "my wife goes shopping on Shabbat; I don't do it, but my wife does." The less personal information you offer, the better. There's a Yiddish expression: If you ask a question, it's already not kosher. So don't ask the question. Don't plant the idea in their minds so that later someone might say, "The cantor was seen doing such and such." You don't want to do that. And unfortunately, people look for those kinds of things.

As far as positioning yourself for the audition, many candidates call me and say "I'd like to be last on the list, because if I'm last on the list they'll remember me better than the first person." I don't really know how to respond to that. Sometimes, they get somebody that they've auditioned right off the bat and they like them very much. I'll get a call and they'll say to me "how many more candidates do you have, because we like this candidate very much." My response to them is, "if you like that candidate it's very likely that some other congregation is going to like them too. Take that person. Don't wait. You're going to lose out." So I'm not sure whether positioning yourself anywhere in particular is crucial. Many people have a superstition about that and we try to accommodate them but it's not always helpful.

By the way, when you call me, I try to give you all the time that you need. We talk about everything. We talk about the job you're looking for, the salary you're looking for. Even when they're renewing a contract, people will call me and say, "the board is meeting tonight, I want to get this, I want to get that, how do I go about it?" We talk it over and try to come to some middle ground. "Maybe this is something that sounds logical to you and would work out for them." So you always have a helping hand from us. It's really a terrific service that the Assembly does. My wife always says, "I'm only sorry that when our kids graduated from college they didn't have somebody like you to call." We try to be helpful, but sometimes it doesn't work. There are people—not because they don't have the best talent—but for some reason they have a tough time finding positions right off the bat.

Practice bragging. That's hard to do, and you have to do it with a lot of taste. Make yourself a list of five achievements or five skills or five things you're good at or have done in your last position that you're proud of. And prepare yourself for negatives that they may have heard about you, statements like, "I heard that you don't come on time to Bar Mitzvah lessons." Bar Mitzvah lessons are a killer. They are a killer because parents are so nervous at that time—much more than the kids—that they find fault with everything. They want them to have twenty lessons a week. You can't say anything and you still have to deal with it. They're scared.

Reaction from the floor:

With regard to bragging about accomplishments, I'm also a composer, conductor and arranger, and have a secular music background. Whenever I'm auditioning for a congregation that has some musical interest I present all these skills as tools that can be used in creating a better musical team. I emphasize how I give people the opportunity to succeed by making sure they have something that fits their instrumental abilities or that fits their vocal talents or that even fits their acting abilities. I've been presenting it in terms of being a musical professional, that I can build an infrastructure that will let their congregants shine, that I would not be a prima donna. Is that a good approach? I ask because I still haven't been hired.

Hazzan Shames:

As long as you put it in that context, that they would benefit from your talents, I think that's good.

Another reaction from the floor:

I don't have too much experience with this, but there's a line in Hamlet, "suit yourself to the words and the words to yourself." I'm beginning to think that when you go to different congregations, things that might be true of yourself—that you think are exciting and interesting—might scare them. In other words, if I go to a smaller town and I say we can try to integrate the Hebrew school program and the religious services as I've done elsewhere—if they're a smaller community they'd probably be wary of the idea—because they don't really get it. But if you go to a bigger place where they're used to that approach, they pick right up on it and get more excited. Is it right to start talking about *Friday Night Live* to a group in the midwest who know nothing about it?

Hazzan Shames:

They'll probably tell you, "look, we're a small congregation and we don't do things that way," and then you can respond. You say, "we'll do it slowly. This is something that's going to take a couple of years to establish and we're going to work on it. There will be articles in the bulletin, and a lot of preparation involving a lot of people. By the time the first *Friday Night Live* service comes off, everyone will be ready for it."

By the way, if you're looking for a position, a lot of people come and say they don't know what the rules of the Assembly are. First of all, if you want guidelines, they're ready for you. When you're looking for a position, call me. We'll get you an application. And if you're a member of the Assembly, don't for a moment think that you won't be sent anywhere that you want to be sent. We may think it's not the right place for you, and I might tell you it isn't, but if you're persistent we'll send you there.

Question from the floor:

I always wondered if you sat in your office and said, "we'll send him there, we'll send her there..."

Hazzan Shames:

No, that's not true. I think that would be really unfair. As a matter of fact, very often I get a call from somebody regarding a certain position and they'll say, "Look, I think they would like me there. Will you call and push this job for me." And I'll say I really can't do that, no matter who it is. It would be unfair to another candidate. So we never do that. But if somebody calls you from a congregation, you're not to respond to them. You say, "please call the Placement Office of the Cantors Assembly, I'm really not allowed to talk to you." You are protected by that, you become a professional immediately. They look at you differently, they act differently with you.

Another question from the floor:

I'm a little confused about something you said before. I applied to one congregation a little bit late because I had just moved back to New York and wasn't sure what I really wanted to do. The letter that I received from the congregation said they were not going to give me an interview because so many cantors had already applied for the job. You said before that it should make no difference where on the list of candidates you are. Shouldn't someone who sends in an application—no matter how late—at least get an interview? I felt really frustrated; I shouldn't have just gotten a letter which suggested that they didn't even want to bother.

Hazzan Shames:

Sure. That's a dilemma that the Placement Commission has when a wonderful job comes up and everybody calls and says, "I want to be sent there." We don't want to be like a meat market. We don't want to send everybody at once so they think, "Oh, no problem. We're going to find someone, we've got forty candidates." We really try not to do that. We try to send no less than three and no more than five the first time around. And then we try very hard to convince them to make a choice before sending the next group. However, the candidates themselves say, "I don't care how many you've

already sent; I want to be sent there.” And they have every right to demand that. And because I don’t want to stand in their way, I’ll say O.K. But in a way they’re doing themselves an injustice because they’re going to wait unnecessarily until the end of the year just to hear from that one congregation. Most of our placement takes place around May or June.

Here’s another non-verbal component of an interview: looking the part. The way we present ourselves and the way we say things have long been known to be significant. The impression you make in the first few minutes is the lasting one. How you dress for the interview, how you control your outer signs of nervousness and how dynamic you are as you talk to your search committee will weigh heavily on the outcome. Remember, you are a *hazzan*. You are interviewing for a position of dignity, of stature, and your clothing should represent that calling. Image will have a great impact on the outcome. It’s labeled “Impression Management.” Look good and you will *be* good. Dress the part. Try to look fit and healthy. Try to look as though you’ve had a good night’s sleep. You should appear vigorous and you should seem like you have the ability to handle stress.

There are some basic rules for dress. Dress to suit yourself rather than to be in step with high fashion. Dress as expensively as you possibly can, and wear darker colors rather than light ones. Get a good haircut. Polish your shoes. For women, wear less rather than more jewelry. These things are important. I’ve had people call me and say, “you know your candidate looked really shabby, didn’t match up to what we want.” So look good.

A simple thing like a handshake can make a difference. It should be a good, friendly and yet strong handshake, and it could just color the overall picture of who you are in a favorable way. Body language is very important. What we say with our bodies is very powerful. You give off non-verbal clues with your body. Lean slightly forward when somebody is talking to you, and you look as if you really are in tune with what that person is saying to you. It’s very important that you convey the impression you’re giving them your full attention. Make frequent eye contact. These things sound like really nothing at all, but believe me, they are important. Present a pleasant facial expression. You should look alive. Sound like you’re interested and enthusiastic through vocal inflections. Sit up straight a lot of the time. Avoid folding your arms in front of you. Know what that signal is; it means “no”. Avoid sitting or standing with your legs far apart. Project your voice. Articulate clearly, don’t mumble. Say what you want to say. Use good diction. Avoid talking too fast or too slow. Don’t talk too much; you’re going to talk yourself out of a job. I guarantee you. Many people have gotten the job and then in the last five minutes they won’t stop talking and they talk themselves out of a job. I know this for a fact. Ask beforehand what they want to hear, and tell yourself you’re going to be great.

Now I’d like to discuss the interview questions and how to handle them. The good news is that once you have sung, the interviewer will really have three basic questions. Can this person fill the position? Can this person be comfortable with us? Can this person fit in as a team player? They want to see you as part of the staff, fitting in, and being able to resolve any problems within the staff. And by the way, don’t ever let other staff members know if you have an argument with your rabbi. It will get around, and congregants love to hear that you’re fighting with the rabbi because then

they don't have to worry about the synagogue. Their attention is focused on you and the rabbi. And their excuse will be, "well *they're* not getting along, so nothing's good."

All through the interview the committee will be assessing your experience and your suitability. They might ask about your last job, about working with the staff and how was it in your last position. If you've had a problem on your last job with your rabbi, don't come forward and say it. If they say, "how did you get along with the rabbi?" Your answer might be, we did the best we could; we're both very hard workers and we both tried very hard. Sometimes it didn't work out." Don't say anything negative. It's not going to do anybody any good.

Emphasize how hard working you are, how motivated, committed, loyal. Point out your flexibility. It really doesn't matter how good you are unless you fit the company image. Each company has its own character and its value system. The same is true in a synagogue. They have a certain image that they like to guard, and they'd like you to be part of that image. List how many different ways you can get the job done: through concerts; songfests; teaching in classrooms as well as from the pulpit. They will want to know how well you handle competitiveness. Will you really be up front with the rabbi; will you sit down and sort out the things that are proving difficult? Will you be able to say to each other, "do you find it difficult when I'm being honored for twenty years of service? Is that a tough time for you?" How often have you stood in a line after Shabbat services and somebody comes by and says to the rabbi, "what a great sermon", and just walks by you? Or someone says to you, "that was gorgeous today" and doesn't say a word to the rabbi. It's very demeaning to the ignored party. If it should happen that someone gives a compliment only to you, your reply might be, "well, we *both* tried very hard to make it a beautiful service." That may not be true, but you've got to make it seem that way. Don't say anything until you know exactly what you're going to say. Stay above the line. What does that mean? Rather than focusing on negative experiences, focus only on the part of things that you've done. Information is more easily remembered about those things. Tell **your** story. They'll want to know about how you got into the cantorate. They love to hear that. What did you do? What prompted you to become a cantor? And don't use tentative language: I feel; I could; I think; I can; perhaps I would, all that doesn't really say anything.

Don't leave your interview without knowing what comes next. Say to the committee, "is this the last time you're going to see me, is there going to be another interview, what is the final stage?" If you end with that, it leaves the positive impression on them that you're well motivated and organized, that you want to know the exact procedure that is going to be followed. We ask congregations to send back the evaluation sheets which we mailed to them. They're very lax at doing that. They want all the service they can get, but they don't respond in kind. I feel bad for candidates because they want to know "why didn't I get that job?" If they haven't sent back an evaluation sheet I'll say to you, "Call that congregation. Ask them, "What's going on with me? Have you made any decision?" You have the right to do that.

Question from the floor:

I was wondering if you had an answer to this question because it came up in the last three interviews: “who is the person in your congregation that you had the most disputes with, and how did you handle them?” I was coming from a situation where

there was a massive dispute with one particular individual who happened to be the most influential person. What answer should I have given other than, “well the man was a complete jerk and I couldn’t tolerate him?”

Hazzan Shames:

I think there are several answers: “You know, what was then is then, I’m headed in a new direction...I’d rather not discuss it...it doesn’t matter...it’s not going to do anybody any good...I don’t want to say anything bad about anybody, everybody tries their best and sometimes it just doesn’t work.”

Reaction from the floor:

The response that I got to that was, “well obviously there was a problem, so why don’t you go ahead and tell us about it.”

Hazzan Shames:

At that point you might say, “You know, most day-to-day problems were handled in the synagogue. You can be sure I didn’t molest any kids, I didn’t go out with anybody’s spouse; those are big problems. The other things were just annoyances that became problems, but they’re really not very important.” You might try that.

Follow-up reaction from the floor:

Well, I made the mistake of shutting the door to my office one day while I was teaching somebody Torah reading, and the rumor spread that I slept with a congregant. If they say that, what would be your next suggestion?

Hazzan Shames:

If they said that to you, then I would answer, “it was a complete fabrication; that’s the only way I can respond.”

Any other questions right now?

Comment from the floor:

I think that’s a terrible question for any committee member to ask a candidate.

Hazzan Shames:

I do too.

Another comment from the floor:

I wanted to respond to two things you said. First, in getting feedback I find what works best is that several months after the interview, once they’ve made their selection and it wasn’t me, I call up my contact and ask that person for feedback. It’s very constructive, and very professional. The other thing which you did mention and which I found very helpful, was to ask the committee beforehand what *they* would be

interested in knowing. Sometimes committees don't even know the right questions to ask.

Hazzan Shames:

I agree. During the interview itself, here are a few more cautions. Don't eat or drink or smoke or be merry. I'll tell you why. You're going to be busy. If they offer you coffee, for example, don't take it. Inevitably that cup of coffee is going to spill. You're going to be dealing with the spilled coffee, the glass is going to rattle, it's going to be an annoyance to you and to them. Don't accept any kind of refreshment. Just concentrate on your interview.

Stay silent. Be a good listener. Don't interrupt. Wait for them to ask questions. Get the best offer. Negotiate. As a member of the Cantors Assembly and the United Synagogue, there are lists of benefits clearly outlined for you when you go out on a job. They know what they are. There's also a model contract. Many congregations today believe in an entire salary package. When I started in this field a *hazzan* got his salary, and on top of that there were benefits. Today they think of it as a package. You can divide it any way you want, that's up to you. And of course you can deal with your parsonage allowance that way too. I'm sure you all know about that. Don't discuss salary until the job has been offered to you. It's tactically a bad move; when you get the job, then you can talk about the salary. If they really want you, the salary range will come up a bit. Usually they'll low-ball on an application, they'll put down the lowest figure possible. It doesn't mean that's what they're going to do. Certainly, if you see that a congregation has 800-or-more members, you know they're going to pay a decent salary. They're going to have to.

After the interview, it helps to stay in touch. After three days you might drop a note to each person on the committee. State how much you enjoyed the interview; confirm your continuing interest, offer additional information if they should request it. You can be humble. Rather than focusing on "I", use the third person a lot of times. It's always hard, because of the nature of the interview. See if you can just change that a little bit. If areas of weakness came up, try to show how you've learned from them and how you overcame them. If there are some problems you might have had in the past, assure them you've learned from the experience and will continue learning. That might be helpful.

If they say to you, "have you any questions for us?" be careful. This might be a slippery slope. The question may only have been a polite one. You might actually have a certain question, but it shouldn't be anything of real substance. That type of question should have been covered in the application, and if you ask it later you imply that there is something amiss. It becomes a criticism, rather than something positive. So I'd be very careful about that. I often hear from candidates, "I have a whole list of questions I'm going to ask them." I always warn them to be careful of that.

Reaction from the floor:

I'm a little surprised to hear you say that. One of the things I would stress on this point is that when we ask a question it shows interest. If a candidate doesn't have questions of a substantive nature I would wonder if they're really interested in the position. Even if you already know—if you've talked to somebody else or looked at the

web site—it seems to me that it is very important to demonstrate genuine interest by asking questions.

Hazzan Shames:

I appreciate the input. Look, I think what I'm trying to say is that sometimes it comes off badly. You might ask a question that really is indelicate. For example, knowing there was a problem, if you still asked, "how did your last cantor get along with your rabbi?" would not be a good move.

Second reaction from the floor:

If they asked me, "Have you any questions for us?" I would say, "We are professionals, just like you folks on the committee. We research jobs, we really know what to do and how to do it; especially when it comes to choirs and classes." Usually those questions are asked of us—maybe not directly—and we know enough to realize that they're really asking about youth choirs," even though that was not the direct question. So we talk about what they want to know. And then I would say to them, "What would you expect a professional cantor who's gone through an hour interview with you—after doing research—to ask that we already have not discussed?" I'm not trying to be confrontational; it's just that I've been in that place.

Hazzan Shames:

All those things are usually on the application sheet. I don't mean to negate your argument, but I've tried to anticipate most of the questions that might be asked, and what I've not mentioned, you'll find on the application. Items like: how many Jews in the area; how many day schools; do you want the candidate to be a *shomer Shabbat*; all those kind of questions are on the application.

Third reaction from the floor:

There's another thing. I was once interviewing with a congregation and I said to them "I really don't have any questions now, but if and when we go to the next step I certainly want to do more research about how your school is set up, what courses are being given." Had there been a next step I'm sure there, those questions would have come up.

Hazzan Shames:

Thank you. Now, for managing the interview process itself. Always arrive about thirty minutes early. That will allow you to get rid of some anxiety, possibly to use the facilities. Get rid of everything except what you might need for the interview, for example, your music. What I've left for last is the final category of questions: getting the best offer for negotiating; what happens next; staying silent; remaining in touch; and questions likely to be asked. Do you take singing lessons? What do you feel about *congregational participation*, and how do you define it? What does it mean to you? It's become a big word, it's all you're going to hear. Do you like Debbie Friedman? How do you feel about the cantorship today as opposed to ten years ago? Which do you prefer? I think what is true is that today we're playing on a much different field than we were when I got out of school.

Reaction from the floor:

If they ask that question, ten years ago was only 1991. I can't say that I've observed a great deal of change since then. Debbie Friedman was already a force, Klepper and Freeland were already in play. There's a lot of what's going on now that was going on then.

Hazzan Shames:

I don't think they were as much of a force as they are today. Certainly from the time I graduated, it's a whole different ball game. When I came to my congregation, the only congregation I've served since I got out of school almost forty-seven years ago, I had a big choir and an organ. There was Nowakowsky and Dunayevsky and Gerovich. Theirs were gorgeous, gorgeous compositions. I don't use even one of them anymore. I still use the organ, still use the choir, but only for responses and little refrains that I throw in because that's what the public wants, or at least that's what we think they want.

Comment from the floor:

The specific question is, "do you play guitar?"

Hazzan Shames:

You're right. Even though I still think of the 1960s as the end of the guitar era, it's still a viable thing. Somehow, if you play a keyboard, it's not the same. It's too bad, but that's the way people think of it. I think that's the direction, we have kind of a Camp Ramah mentality in the synagogue. I'm not going to say it's bad or good, it's just what it is.

I appreciate your listening for all this time, and I hope I've been of some help to you. If there are any further questions, just come to me during the convention. Thank you.

How to Keep a Position

Hazzanim Robert Scherr, Natick, MA;
and Richard Wolberg, Fall River, MA

Hazzan Robert Scherr:

I'm Bob Scherr. Probably the two reasons that I was asked to give this session is first, that I'm involved as co-chair of Placement with Mort Shames and so I encounter a lot of circumstances and a lot of different congregations. And that experience, added to twenty-five years of service in my current job speaks a lot to the power of inertia, and also to the meaning of what it is to have one job for a long time. I'm going to talk about some philosophical issues and some practical issues, and then I'm hoping that what will really happen is kind of a free-flowing discussion about the concerns that you've had, because there isn't a great deal of wisdom to know about this, but there are a lot of individual circumstances about which we can be concerned.

I want to start by asking how many people are married or in a relationship for more than ten years? Then you really know most of what I have to say, because the dynamics between a *hazzan* and his congregation, or her congregation, is really very much like the dynamics of any other relationship. You're both being asked to grow together, you're not being asked to remain static. When two people are in a relationship, after a number of years they find themselves living with very different assumptions than they lived with when they first fell in love. When two people are together they find that they don't grow at an even pace with one another. There's a lot of trust that happens to be constantly re-engendered and renewed between them, and a lot of conversation about what that trust means. Love only carries you for about fifteen minutes in a relationship between people, and in a congregation it lasts for about fourteen. So, really what we're talking about this morning are all the things that take place—not dissimilarly—between two people when they elect to keep a relationship going and understand that it's something they have to consciously work at and not depend on love alone to carry through. I think that theme is very important because it translates itself into political terms, into the work you have to do in the congregation to keep renewing and keep building and make sure that you are at the top of everybody's hit parade. It's not that much different than what takes place between two people who learn that they cannot take one another for granted, and that things simply cannot be assumed for tomorrow because they were in place yesterday. And if I had any single piece of advice it would be for people to proceed on that assumption.

Another item that I think is very important is to realize that a relationship changes because the individuals change, their careers change, their goals and outlooks on the world change, as well as their politics and priorities. The same is true of a *hazzan* and her or his community. What that means is that the job that you were doing in 1980 is not the job that you're doing in the year 2001. The responsibilities change. The needs of the congregation change. Sometimes you have to be the forecaster of those changes and other times you have to be flexible and listen to what your congregation is telling you. I'll use my own life's experience in that way. When I first came to this particular congregation (and it's about the same size now as it was twenty-

five years ago) we had twice the number of children in religious school that we do now. We had a much larger crop of B'nai Mitzvah. Once upon a time I used to teach a cultural music program to the entire school. Once upon a time I had a children's choir. I do neither of these anymore in an active way. There was a time when we had Bar Mitzvah numbers in the seventies, and although I had an assistant, I was doing nothing but teaching B'nei and B'not Mitzvah. We'd fit two in on Friday night and two in on Saturday morning and move them out and bring the next four in the following week. That's all I was doing, besides occasionally marrying people. Today, that's all changed. Our Bar Mitzvah numbers are under forty, and I spend much more time teaching Torah readers and counseling people than I used to. In my job today, partly because I've been there for a long time, I am often the primary person who is consulted when people have personal needs. Which means that I have to allow a certain amount of time in my schedule to be available for that. I don't have a choir anymore. And what I think has helped is that I did not mourn the changes that took place, but moved on and looked ahead.

When my congregation elected to get rid of our Torah reader it scared the willies out of me because I was the one who was going to have to be responsible for making sure we did a full *k'ri'ah*, and it worked out. I hardly ever read myself, but over the course of two or three years I invested a lot of time teaching a lot of people to read, and now I have over one-hundred Torah readers, and they're able to handle a responsibility that I used to have nothing to do with. If I'm not going into the nursery school today as much as I did ten years ago, I use some of that time for pastoral needs. I have arranged for other people to go in and do some of the music in the nursery school that I used to do. I don't do as much folk singing with classes because the classes are studying prayer curriculum today that they didn't used to do. I have teachers in my school who are able to do the kind of singing for the fun of it that I used to lead. What I'm telling you is my job today really doesn't resemble the job that it was twenty-five years ago. Part of that is my own choice and part of that is simply the needs have evolved in the congregation. That's what you have to do. You have to be prepared to look down the road, not to think about next year, but to think two years down the road about what you want to be doing and about what the needs of the congregation are going to be, so that you can be able to be the one to make those decisions and not have the decisions made for you. You have to solve the problems before they arise.

It sounds pretty simple to me when I say that stuff. I know that every congregation is different and I know that what I've been able to accomplish in my congregation has been because of the random circumstances of the world. Sometimes I understand that I'm a little bit lucky, and that may be unusual. Not every congregation runs smoothly, and if yours happens to have fiscal problems and turns to the cantor and lays three more jobs on you, it may be necessary to undertake those extra responsibilities in order to maintain your job, understanding that they're on a temporary basis. Again, when the Torah reader left for a while, I was spending a lot more time preparing portions of the *k'ri'ah* just to cover others. I don't have to do that anymore. But that was a necessary thing for me to do in order to make the situation right for the congregation without any discussion of what my job description was. It had nothing to do with what was written in my contract. It had to do with what the needs of the congregation were.

Richard, you've also been in your congregation for twenty-five years, how have you managed to maintain your sanity and theirs for so long?

Hazzan Richard Wolberg:

The topic is how to keep a job. The first thing I'd like to say is that Bob and I got to serve twenty-five years in our respective congregations. It's very interesting. I had applied to his position in 1976 before he did, and for whatever reason it was an area that I didn't particularly want to go to. But one thing all of you have to ask yourselves is, "Do I want to keep the job?" If you're not happy and you really feel that you want to get out of there, then obviously this wouldn't apply to you. The things I will suggest are not going to apply if you really don't want to keep your job. There are a lot of places that you may not want to be at, for whatever reason. On the other hand, there are people who go from position to position; Bob sees them more than anybody. You hear about so-and-so who was two years here, and three years there, and four months there. With all respect, if you're that kind of person, you might benefit from some type of counseling. A lot of times you may have problems in your own personal life that are affecting everything you do. You probably should go for some kind of counseling to get your own personal life in order. Because your problem isn't keeping a job, your problem is with yourself. *Shalom*, peace, really means whole. You have to be whole within yourself.

Now, once you are in a position that you like and you want to keep, that's what we have to address. One thing I have always found when I teach my students is that you can't make issues out of things. Let's take the smallest thing that might happen: they'll ask you to be at a *minyan* that you ordinarily wouldn't attend; they want you to cover for your rabbi, whatever. You say, "I'm sorry, that's my day off. I can't do that." If you're that type of person, you're never going to keep your job because you are making an issue out of nothing. I feel the only thing I'm going to make an issue out of is something that may mean my life, my livelihood, something that's really important. I don't make issues out of small things. If you adopt that policy and swallow your pride sometimes, you will keep your job.

Another thing that cantors and rabbis have a tendency to do is saying to them, "Well if that's the case, I'm going to leave." Never threaten to leave unless you mean it. I can tell you that during twenty-five years in one place, there was only one issue that really concerned me. At that point I said to them, "I think it may be time for you to get another cantor." At which point they said, "Oh no, no, we don't want another *hazzan*." But I wasn't doing it to play a game. I really felt very strongly about that issue, and believe me, it was a big one.

Question from the floor:

I'm sure that I'm not in the same place as everybody else, by which I mean that most people have been in their positions for a long time. I'm just starting in my position, but one of the things that already happened was that my rabbi wanted me to do six weddings in a day. That meant schlepping the family from one hotel to another to

another. I am a single mom and I have two kids. I asked my cantorial school and I got advice from the placement committee, after which I said, "Three per day is my limit."

Hazzan Scherr:

I'd like to respond to that. I would tell you that you should have done the six weddings that day. There are occasions where the need arises. I dare say that everybody in this room has put in these awful sixteen-hour days where you're at the *minyan* at six-thirty in the morning and you leave the last meeting at ten or eleven at night and you feel pretty abused. But some of those days actually find me doing things that are important in my life. Some days I'm at the *minyan* at six-thirty in the morning and I'm at some other meeting because someone needed to spend time with me at nine and then I'm singing with the nursery school at ten and I'm at a staff meeting at eleven and then I'm teaching B'nei and B'not Mitzvah from two o'clock to seven, and after a half-hour for dinner I'm at two more meetings that night. I think we've all got days like that, a day like the one you're describing. Not knowing all the circumstances of your life, or how often this happens in the congregation, I would tell you that you're important to all six of those events as the *hazzan* of the congregation. I wouldn't look for something which is practical or fair. On a day like that, neither practical nor fair applies, if it's only one day. If you were doing this week after week, then you would anticipate having to make some kind of adjustment because of your particular family situation and the need for childcare. But there will always be occasional days like that.

Response from the floor:

But what if it's not only *days* like that. What if it's six *weeks* in a row where on Friday night you have services, Saturday you have three B'nai Mitzvah at three separate services, and then on Sunday, three to six weddings.

Hazzan Wolberg:

There are a couple of issues here. One of them is a subtle thing, I don't know if anybody picked up on it. When you said, "my rabbi wants me to do six weddings," there's a whole different issue there that I wouldn't even get into right now, between rabbi and cantor. That's one thing. But what Bob is saying is very true. When you accept a position like that, it's your job. These six weddings, I assume, are members.

Second response from the floor:

Not all of them, no.

Hazzan Wolberg:

Well, then I don't know. You have to have an understanding with your board as to what you're responsible for and what you're not responsible for. That's another issue about keeping your job. There has to be a delineation of duties. Like Bob says, sometimes there may be extra demands. To be very crass and pragmatic about it, my thinking would be, well if I had six weddings, I'm earning a little extra money.

Third response from the floor:

No, not a penny extra, because it's included in my salary.

Hazzan Wolberg:

Wait, wait, you said they were non-members as well as member weddings!

Fourth response from the floor:

They can't be non-members; membership is the price for getting married.

Hazzan Scherr:

So they are members.

Hazzan Wolberg:

So that's your job! Again, the topic for this session is how to keep your job. If you have a feeling that it's too much for you, you're not going to keep your job. But my advice to you is when you take a job, be aware of what you have to do.

Fifth response from the floor:

Well, nobody mentioned that.

Hazzan Scherr:

There are a lot of things that come up in any job. Five years from now there will be other things that will come up that nobody mentioned. We cannot talk about what's in your contract or what's in your job description. We're talking about how a community values you, needs you—you can say, exploits you—but nonetheless, it develops out of your relationship with that community. I don't think you can have the expectation that it's going to be fair or well compensated. There are all of these dynamics that simply don't play day-to-day. One of the reasons why you're in this profession is because of your concern for being a part of people's lives. You may not feel at a particular moment how engaged you are with a Bar Mitzvah family or a wedding family or a funeral family. But ten years later that family might say to you, "Oh we were looking at that video and it was such a beautiful wedding and we're so glad that we're still in this congregation and you're still the cantor." Or somebody at whose parent's funeral you officiated, you don't even know if they knew your name when you were there that day, someday they may come over to you in the supermarket and say, "I never got to tell you how beautiful the service was when my mother died." That's the reality of the connection that you have with people. You won't see it in a paycheck, nobody will even say thank you at the moment! It's not at the moment, it's down the road. And that's why you chose this crazy profession.

Question from the floor:

Would you say you have less flexibility in the beginning than you may have down the road?

Hazzan Scherr:

Yes, but down the road it can get worse. You have no flexibility at the beginning. You're building your relationships with people. In my first or second year in a congregation I would not say, "Six weddings, that's too much." Five years later I

would say, "Here's the deal. I'm not going to be there for the wedding at two and the wedding at three, but I've got somebody whose coming in to do it. I've already made the arrangements and it's done. I've got to be home because my kid's got a little league game that day that I promised to attend and that's the only way I'm able to manage it." You can't do that during the first years, but you can do it down the road.

Sixth response from the floor:

With all due respect, I appreciate what you're saying, but that is not what the dean of placement at my school said. I am still a student, so that my contract should fall under the laws of my school, but apparently it doesn't.

Hazzan Wolberg:

Did you ever hear the expression, "welcome to the real world?"

Hazzan Scherr:

Again, I have to tell you that neither the words in your job description, nor the convention of what is fair really apply here.

Final from the floor:

I understand that. I'm just telling you that I'm not ordained yet and I work under the guidance of the dean of placement at my school. They have to OK every aspect of my job. It's all very well to say what you're saying, but I wasn't able to do that because I'm under the jurisdiction of my school.

Hazzan Scherr:

Let me say this. If you're in a congregation that's having six weddings in one day, you're in a very nice congregation. You don't know how lucky you are. Many people would love to switch places with you. You have to deal with the conflict.

Question from the floor:

I want to address that, and what you said about being flexible and not making something out of nothing. If you go to your first place and you haven't been anywhere before and there are all these unknowns, when you sit down to negotiate for your next period of time, can you then be insistent on changing terms that weren't in the first contract. As long as they're willing to keep you can you say, "I want to be paid for officiating at six weddings on a Sunday," or something like that?

Hazzan Scherr:

I'll tell you what I would suggest you say beforehand: "You know, when my contract comes up for renewal I've got some things I want to change." Phrase it in broad terms, like that. I would not wait until that negotiation to start the discussion. If you have a pretty steady personnel chair in your congregation and you have a year or two still to go on your contract, but you're thinking about these things, I would pull this person aside. I would say, "I'd like to talk to you about some aspects of the job. I'm thinking about down the road, and here are some changes I want to make." If those changes are important to you, you don't want to wait until you have that famous negotiating meeting where you're trying to talk about salary and vacation and

everything else, and suddenly these job description issues get rolled into the discussion. You would want people to share your concern for how your job is set up before that negotiation takes place. You want that to be separate from those other kinds of money discussions.

Hazzan Wolberg:

And along those lines, you used the word insistent. You don't want to be insistent, you want to be reasonable. I know you think if you go somewhere else it will be better. But wherever you go, you want to talk to somebody who's reasonable. And you try to do it in a way that makes it clear to them, as simple sounding to them, as it is to you. The other thing I wanted to touch on is, when you talk about situations and relationships changing, we're all basically the same as the people we work with. The difference comes when your lay leadership changes, and all of a sudden a new board gets elected.

Hazzan Sherr:

Whenever that happens (and it happens to us all the time) I think about putting the *pasuk* on the door, *vayakam melech chadash asher lo yad et yosef*. It's one of the reasons why I talk about reinventing yourself and maintaining relationships. All the people who hired me are now gone, which means that I've had to build new relationships with an entirely different group of people. And I can't count on the three old-timers who are still active to tell all these new people on the board who I am. I'm the only one who can do that. I don't mean to make this something that is abstract or philosophical, I mean this as something which is really tangible and day-to-day. This is about relationships with people, and you really don't negotiate by what's fair or what's written. You rely on the bond of that relationship. So you're going to be doing lots of things that are not in your contract and that's how you have to live with a community.

Hazzan Wolberg:

I agree. It's not only important, but helpful to get involved with community. I'm on the board of several institutions, including a medical facility. I'm on all kinds of committees functioning in areas totally outside the realm of what I do, and it brings honor to my congregation. Your people will appreciate that you're involved in community projects. That widens you as a human being. It's very important to get involved and to feel part of the whole community. Bob teaches at a college; we do a lot of things besides our own jobs. And if you have the time for it, people will respect you for being active. It will also give you an anchor in the community. Also remember another thing. You outlive the presidents, many of you outlive the rabbis if you stay there long enough. I always say to myself, "If I have a president I don't really like, I only have to tolerate him for two years, *"gamzu ya'avov"*. Also, be yourself. I find that if I'm angry with somebody, I do better if I let them know. Because if you harbor something, it's going to come out in the wrong way and you'll end up harming yourself more. If you have an issue with somebody, confront him or her. Let them know that you're sincere and you're honest and you want to talk about it, and they will appreciate that.

Comment from the floor:

I'm not a *hazzan*, just a lawyer. But I wanted to mention that a lot of congregations will get ten lawyers in a room, and you'll be on the other side of the table by yourself. You're a wonderful *hazzan* but they've placed a thirty-two page document in front of you. They'll tell you, "Don't worry, just sign it." Before you do, let a lawyer look it over. If you're not married to one, get one to help you out. There are a lot of things you might not understand. That's important. I've seen so many people who say, "I signed this but I didn't really understand what it meant."

Question from the floor:

I have a question about outside activities that bring honor to the congregation, like teaching. Is it generally a safe rule of thumb that if a conflict arises, such as the funeral of a member, the congregation will call the school and explain the situation?

Hazzan Scherr:

Always. You know, I do things for my own joy and satisfaction outside the congregation. But any time a need arises, I'm there. I was on the phone at ten o'clock last night with a sick congregant. That's my priority: making sure these people's lives are taken care of. I don't care if it's my day off, that doesn't get in the way of a funeral or one of these useless meetings I go to. I know it's useless, but I don't tell them so. I would tell the school where I teach up front, that these things are going to happen and that when they do I'm not going to be there. I have to tell you that I see people getting into trouble because they say, "This isn't in my contract." I see people say, "Hey, it's my day off!" Don't ever say that out loud. I know one person who never uses the word "day off". He says, "I'm working at home." I don't think you have to go to that extreme. I think people understand you deserve time off for yourself. You deserve that, even God rested from work. Again, it's relationships that you're building, it's not the terms of a contract.

Reaction from the floor:

I want to comment on a few things. First, you spoke of a president that you may not like, so I think it's important to think maybe *he doesn't like you*. I've been in my congregation for fourteen years and my experience has been that these people keep popping up again. In any case, as a past president they can still be involved in executive decisions. I think you have to engage these people. You can't leave people with the idea that you will just wait until the next one. People like that will always be there. It's the old story of prejudice. People are usually afraid of that which they don't know. Talk to your enemies, your detractors; that kind of interaction is important.

Hazzan Wolberg:

Thank you. I believe I addressed that when we discussed what to do if you're angry about something.

Second reaction from the floor:

Confrontation is a difficult thing. It's usually that you're always in the wrong and they're always right, no matter what. Which brings me to my next comment, about bringing a lawyer. They don't like you to bring a lawyer.

Third reaction from the floor:

I disagree. During contract negotiations, my congregation was happy when I brought a lawyer. They preferred it, because they're used to negotiating with lawyers. But I wouldn't bring in a lawyer every time we have a disagreement.

Hazzan Wolberg:

You know what this points to? That everyone's situation is different, in fact unique. I'll give you an example. I haven't had a contract in I don't know how many years. I wouldn't advise you to do that, but when you have a relationship with a congregation such as I do, it's like family. Remember what Bob said, that you must get involved with your congregation. You can't be aloof. There's a man in my congregation who suffers from a severe form of anxiety. I'm in touch with his psychiatrist. I'm involved with his social worker. I'm on the phone with him every day. I don't receive a penny for it. But when you get involved with your people, you will be respected for it. And let me tell you, it has a ripple effect. This man has relatives, and the relatives know what I do. Not that I do it for that reason. I would do it for somebody that nobody knew. But the point is, if you get involved you're going to enjoy a much wider range of acceptance and appreciation.

Question from the floor:

What is your rabbi's reaction to this?

Hazzan Wolberg:

I was hoping you wouldn't ask. That's a very perceptive question, the answer to which really depends on your rabbi. I worked on my relationship with my rabbi for many years. Rabbis will generally feel threatened by their cantor. There's no question about it. A rabbi will feel threatened if his cantor is good at what he does. And sometimes, it's crazy, but if you're not good, you'll have a better relationship with your rabbi. The short answer to what you're asking is, I had to work on my relationship with my rabbi, because of my ability to do what I do well. There were times when it was difficult.

Comment from the floor:

My rabbi and I work very, very well together. I'm lucky in that almost anything I do in my work, my rabbi praises publicly. And I do the same for him. So, I'm lucky in that respect. One of the concerns we share is that the board of our *shul* somehow remains aloof from any of the things we try to do that are not social, but ritual. On anything having to do with the service, they're silent.

Hazzan Scherr:

Let me address that. Part of your job is to promote yourself. Some people do this by writing a column in their synagogue bulletin, which is a helpful thing. Some people do this by going to board meetings and reporting on what they've been doing in

the last month. Nobody speaks for you as well as you do. It also depends on the dynamic of how your board works. I stopped going to board meetings because I felt I needed the time, but instead I write out a report that I count on the vice-president to give on my behalf. I still want people to know all the things that I do. In many congregations the people that sit on the board and hold forth are not necessarily highly involved in all the areas of the congregation that I am. It's perfectly possible for somebody to come and be active on the board and have no idea who I am or what I do. So I make sure that they're hearing about my work in the context of the board meeting. While they're talking about the deficit and hearing that the boiler is about to blow up, I want them to hear about the things that I'm doing. And I make sure that a part of the over-all process is my being promoted publicly. I consider it part of my job to make sure that this happens.

Reaction from the floor:

That's not what I'm talking about. What I'm talking about is not being able to reach the board members, even though I give them information periodically, and even call them. My current president suggested that an effective tool for me might be to call a different member of the board just to say, "This is what I'm doing, I just wanted to let you know, what do you think?" It's not that. It's that for me to *want* to keep the job I need to be able to do something that can make a difference in the *shul*, in the area of religious observance.

Hazzan Wolberg:

How does this affect your keeping your job?

Reply from the floor:

I don't think it affects the keeping of my job--

Hazzan Wolberg:

You just feel a spiritual lacking there? That's a major issue in all of our congregations. We have a lot of people who are totally unaware of a lot of things. In my own place—I hate to say it—but on the first day of Pesach, we didn't have a *minyan*. And this is a congregation with a lot of people. So the answer was, "a lot of people go away for Pesach, so you lost those people. The women work hard at the Seder so you lost those people, and a lot of the men slept a little late so you lost those people." We ended up with less than a *minyan*, the first time that happened since I came there. But it happens. As for board meetings, I do not go. I hate board meetings. I hate meetings, period. But the point is that they know me and I know them, whether or not I attend board meetings. I accept the fact that there wasn't a *minyan* and I tell myself that hopefully there will be a *minyan* next time. You do the best you can under the circumstances.

Question from the floor:

I've been in my congregation for eleven years and I have five years left on my present contract. One of the things you mentioned was the idea that we have to re-invent ourselves as the synagogue changes. I think the synagogue does change. The

leadership of the synagogue changes. Often the relationship between the rabbi and cantor may change. In fact, what the rabbi expects of the cantor may change, as well as what the board of directors wants from the *hazzan*. I wonder if you could give some specific examples in terms of how we can look into the future of the congregation. I would suggest that that is sometimes difficult because the agenda of the congregation is not set by the *hazzan*. It is often left to the rabbi to set the agenda.

Hazzan Scherr:

I would have "looking to the future" conversations with whoever your president is now, and with your rabbinic colleague if you can do that. It's a way to get on the table some things that you're thinking about, and in a way that people can understand. Here's an example of ways in which I have re-invented myself. I didn't used to do the kind of counseling I do now. It's natural that it takes place after a long period of time, once people have a lasting relationship with you. There was a period of time when I was not involved in the daily *minyan*, but for several years I've been highly re-involved in that through training people to *daven*. I'm not going to get into all the issues about training people to lead services at this time, but I teach more *daven'n* skills now than I did ten years ago, and have engaged more people in those areas of life than I used to. Those are some examples.

Hazzan Wolberg:

Here's another example. You have to be aware of something. There are actually three types of congregations. There is the congregation most of you are in the kind that's going to grow. There is the congregation that Bob and I are in, the kind that's declining. And there is the congregation that will remain constant. You have to know what kind of congregation you are in. I'm in a congregation where I will probably be their last *hazzan*. It's getting to the point where I don't think it will be a viable congregation much longer. We'll probably die together. That's the kind of congregation I'm in. There are other congregations that are growing and where you have a lot to look forward to, and a lot of changes. You may even get a *hazzan sheini*. You have to know the kind of congregation you're in. Twenty-five years ago I never had to go to the daily *minyan*. And when it became necessary I resisted it. I didn't say I wasn't going to do it, but I didn't like it. Now I have to go every day. When I came there they used to hold a Shabbat *Minchah* service. We don't have that anymore, so there are trade-offs. And different transactions work in different congregations.

Comment from the floor:

I wanted to share a few things. I'm almost a veteran, it's thirty years since I've graduated. I want to talk about what seem to be two very small issues, and then illustrate how powerful they can be. First of all, the morning *minyan*, where I'm not sure that my voluntary attendance is appreciated. Over the length of time that I have been serving I have made it a practice to be there one day a week. Every Tuesday you'll find me at the *minyan*. On Tuesday mornings it is now expected that the *hazzan* is not only going to be there but will lead the service as well. If I don't want the morning *Minyannaires* to gossip about me, I have to show up. And I never underestimate the power of the morning *minyan*; my missing it will come back to bite

me. The second thing is the area of hospital visitations one day a week. That's also a very important part of any *hazzan's* job.

Hazzan Scherr:

Making phone calls, sending notes, everything you do to raise the level of your human contact with people is essential. It's not written in your job description, but it's as important as anything else that you do.

Reaction from the floor:

I've been at my synagogue for three years, during which I received some very good advice from a rabbi. He said if you go to *minyan* every day, after a year you will have gotten to know the entire membership, because they come to observe their parents *yahrzeit*. Now when someone comes into the chapel and says hello to me, it's like old friends, a wonderful feeling. Also, someone told me if you establish a youth choir very early in your job it's like you're a king. Even if you have six kids on the *bimah* with you singing the *musaf*, people really appreciate it.

Comment from the floor:

First of all, I'd like to mention something that the rabbi and I have been doing for a year now, a small thing. On Friday mornings each of us will call five different congregants. Most of the time I end up leaving a message on their answering machine, but it's appreciated. Secondly, something happened just before I came here. A woman in the congregation came up to me and said, "Cantor, I would love if you would sing Debbie Friedman's *Mi Shebeirach* after the rabbi does his English blessing." Now I have nothing against Debbie Friedman, some of her melodies are nice, but it's not something I would prefer to do. How do you respond to that? Do you say, "I'll think about it?" The other thing was, out of nowhere, a congregant came up to me and sat down and had a meeting with me because he wants me to be a *kol bo*; every time the Torah is read, I should not only be there but he wants me to *lein*. My rabbi has said to me that he actually enjoys when I don't show up, because then he gets to be the *Ba'al K'ri'ah*, and he's pretty good at it. I said to this man, "O.K. I'll think about it." My initial feeling was, "drop dead."

Hazzan Scherr:

I think there are two important things to say about this response. One is, if I were I in your place, I would explain that I might be there for some *minyanim*, but the rabbi will be there other times, and he's a very good reader. He'll read when I'm not there, we're going to share it. I would say it as simply as that.

Response from the floor:

I said exactly that, and he said he still feels it's my place to do it.

Hazzan Scherr:

I wouldn't enter into the argument about whether it is your place or not, I would just say, "Well that's what we're going to do." Don't pursue the argument about who should read. It's not about what's in the job description. It's about an encounter with

one person in the congregation. It happens to us all the time. Somebody comes up and says, "I really want you to sing my favorite *Adon Olam*." In my gut I hate it when people do that, because I have better taste than they do. It's why I'm the *hazzan*, and they're not. I have developed, over the years, a reasonable way of blowing people off where they don't feel miffed. Once in a while I accommodate them, but the way I normally respond is, "Let me check this out; if we have time, I'll do it."

Hazzan Wolberg:

Last week, at a funeral, the daughter asked me, "Would you please sing *Yiddishe Momma*?" I know the lady quite well and I said, "I'm sorry, it's inappropriate. I have to tell you that in all the years I've been a cantor, no one has ever asked me to sing *Yiddishe Momma* for a funeral." She said, "fine." She wasn't mad. If you don't want to do it and you don't think it's appropriate, tell them. That's what I was trying to tell you before. You have to be honest with people. You can't try to please everybody. If you try to please everybody you'll drive yourself crazy.

Hazzan Scherr:

This way, people learn to disagree respectfully, and that's fine. I want to return to the idea of relationship, because this is as true between lovers as it is between professionals and their congregations. Say what you need to say. Be honest in your disagreements and you can learn to respect each other. Disagreement that is built on respect is very important and very healthy.

Question from the floor:

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having or not having a contract?

Hazzan Wolberg:

The answer is, when you have a new president who says, "I never told you that," you're really left hanging. I know everybody in my congregation, so there's nobody I'm afraid of that will do that to me. What has happened is that now the secretary will type the letter with the figures for the salary. That's important because sometimes they may have a dispute about it. So even in my case, the salary is in writing. I think most people should have contracts. It's different if you're in a place twenty-five years and you know your people as I do. I say 99% ninety-nine percent of you should have contracts. As far as involving a lawyer, that could be a double-edged sword. Some of you have said that lawyers are a good idea. And yet if you tell certain congregations that you're going to bring a lawyer, they'll be up in arms.

Hazzan Scherr:

Let me say this about a contract, because I went through a period of years without a contract. I finally said, "this is crazy because guys are going to come along and claim ignorance of certain commitments that were made verbally." All of my contracts are different. It depends on who's writing them at the time. I let whoever is on the committee draw it up. It's a good idea to have a contract. It's not a good idea to go with just a handshake and a smile. I also think that everybody should have an

attorney, not necessarily to come and negotiate for you, but to look at the contract before you sign it.

Hazzan Wolberg:

To sum up I would say the most important thing is sincerity, honesty and also your past experience in what you're doing. You know from what you've done in the past what you can do. To have somebody else dictate what you can do is nice, but you really know your own capabilities better than they do. The main thing we didn't hit upon, which would have occupied a whole session itself is, "How do you deal with a difficult rabbi?" I don't mean that as a joke; it's very serious, and a lot of people have come to me with that problem. Many times what I tell them is try and reason with the rabbi. And if they say, "He's unreasonable," we have a problem. The smart thing is to appraise your situation and to work within its context.

Hazzan Scherr:

I want conclude by reiterating this idea about relationships, which always need to be developed. You have to nurture honesty and trust between individuals. You build your relationships in the community one person at a time. We talked about sending notes, making phone calls, inquiring as to people's welfare. You don't just pray on people's behalf. Whether it's directly or over the phone, you have to make sure the people in your congregation know that you think they are important. That's how they will think *you're* important.

Thank you for coming this morning.

Spirituality: The Role of the *Hazzan*

Dr. Saul Wachs, Professor of Liturgy,
Gratz College, Philadelphia, PA

It's a delight for me to be here, for as far as I know about an hour. I want to go right to what we're dealing with.

I'm going to ask you to get in touch with an experience that had the following characteristics. First of all, it was the most profound thing that ever happened to you. Second, it affected you as a total human being, not just cognitively. Third, it was important, it changed you. You were not the same person afterwards. Fourth, you would not have wanted to miss it. It may have been a positive or a negative experience, but it was a defining experience and you really needed to be there. Fifth, no matter how many times you remember this experience, or you tell it, you cannot fully define, explain or articulate it. There is an element that is ineffable. And finally, the experience points beyond: beyond the measurable, beyond the imperical, beyond the definable. It points to what we call in Hebrew, *ma'alah ma'alah* – it points to transcendence.

What I would like you to do, privately, individually, is to take a moment and try to relive that experience and put down a few words that will help you recall it. I'll go through the list again. I'm asking you to get in touch with an experience that was deep, that affected you as a total human being, that was important, that changed you forever, an experience that you would not have wanted to miss. Even if it was a sad experience you needed to be there, an experience that cannot be fully explained, analyzed, defined. It points to *ma'alah ma'alah* – beyond the definable, the empirical, the measurable. What I'm asking is for you to try and put into words whatever it is that will help you recall that experience. Even if it's just a few words or a sentence, find something that will capture the essence of that experience for you. And I'd like you to do it right now...I wonder if anyone feels comfortable in sharing the experience with the rest of us... Hazzan Lubin.

Hazzan Abraham Lubin:

I've been enjoying a sabbatical from my congregation. This convention represents the last days of my sabbatical and I will be returning to my congregation this coming Shabbat. One of the things I did was to visit Prague. I visited the beautiful museums, but I was told by my guide that there is a synagogue called the Jubilee Street Synagogue that happened to be a few blocks away from my hotel. So I walked out of my hotel the next morning, this was on Shabbat about four weeks ago, and I went to Jerusalemky (Jerusalem) Street. I saw this beautiful façade of a typical large east European synagogue – it was magnificent. I walked toward the door and it was locked. I went to the side door and it was locked as well. There was a gentleman standing as a sentry, and not knowing the language, I motioned to ask if I could go inside. He asked if I had my passport. I did not, but he let me in to the service being held upstairs, not in the main sanctuary.

A gentleman was doing the *Pesukei Dezimra*, very slowly and in a nice *nusach*. In the shul were two women. I sat down in the men's section and a lot of things came to my mind, including matters of so-called spirituality. After all the years of being a *hazzan*, that moment conjured up in my mind so many things about Jewry, about tenacity, about sacrifice, about survival. And these thoughts flashed through my mind even though when it came to *Bar'chu* in the service, we skipped it because there was no *minyan*. Then there was another *Kaddish*, but it didn't look like there was going to be a *minyan*, so they finished at that point. They had a little schnapps, and then they showed me the sanctuary.

The point I want to make is that a feeling of spirituality often comes *despite* the moment, whether it is *Wednesday Night Live*, *Friday Night Live* or Shabbat morning barely live but still breathing. And so I would just mention this as a kind of opening. For me it was a great moment, a challenge to the soul.

Dr. Wachs:

Thank you very much. Perhaps someone else had a different experience... Yes, go ahead please.

Second response from the floor:

I am a student and I serve a small congregation in Connecticut. Recently I was called upon to do my very first funeral, for a young woman who died quite tragically. The experience of officiating at that funeral was very frightening because in this tiny little community, even though I was only a student, I was the one person there that people looked to for comfort and for words to make sense out of this terrible tragedy. I felt completely inadequate to the task. The moment of true transcendence came when I sang *El Male Rachamin*. Even though people didn't really understand its words, that prayer became a vehicle for putting me and them in exactly the same place at the same time. It transformed all of us, a frightening as well as a truly spiritual moment. And afterwards people were silent for a very long time.

Dr. Wachs:

I want to thank you both for volunteering, as well as the rest of you who have your hands raised. But because of the time limitation I think I need to go on. I apologize because I know that there are other important stories to be heard.

I think it's fair to say that the rabbis who shaped the Mishnah, the Talmud, the Midrash—what we call Judaism—had a very skeptical attitude toward much of what we associate with mysticism or spirituality. There are people who feel that the way to achieve spirituality is to be isolated. And yet we know that our tradition, probably more than any other tradition, by the institution of the *minyan* is making a very strong statement that our greatest spiritual moments can come with the community. We cannot recite the *Kedushah* or the *Kaddish* or the *Bar'chu* without a *minyan*. There are people who seek spirituality through asceticism, but those of you familiar with the Mishnah know that in the strictest interpretation of *halachah*, in order to be appointed *sheli'ach tsibbur* one has to have a family. There are people who seek spirituality through poverty yet the *Zohar* says, *ani nechshav k'met*. What does that mean: "a poor person is as good as dead?" I think it means that if you have to spend every minute of the day

trying to feed yourself, there's no time to read a book or listen to music or look at a flower, and that's not life. There are people who seek spirituality through drugs. I'm sure the rabbis would have fought that because if it means anything to be Jewish, it means to struggle with reality.

Much of what we associate with mysticism and spirituality, I think the rabbis would have been very skeptical about, particularly with regard to the masses of people. But there is another kind of spirituality which my teacher Max Kadushin referred to as "normal mysticism," a very interesting term. He meant that there are moments in the here and now—not in the subconscious—when you know that if you take everything that can be measured and weighed and defined and counted, you haven't exhausted reality. There is a dimension of *depth* that is as real as what you can touch. And it is normal because it is available to normal people. One doesn't have to be a shaman or a rabbi or a *hazzan* or a priest to reach it. The rabbis believed we could have those moments in the life cycle, in significant relationships, in making love, in nature, in going to the Land of Israel, in performing *mitzvot*.

Now let me leave the world of the rabbis and go to the world of social science and talk about a non-Jewish professor at Boston University named Peter Berger who wrote a wonderful book called, *A Rumor of Angels – Signals of Transcendence*. I recommend it very highly; you can read it in an hour, you can read it in a month. As I read Berger's book I realized that much of what he was saying was very similar to what Kadushin was talking about, but he had different examples.

His first example was **order**. Berger said, "we have a deep propensity to establish order." We are not comfortable when things are messy. Even in the death camps, the most put-together people insisted in ordering whatever little pieces of reality they could. One of my heroes is Rabbi David Weiss Ha-Livny, who was ordained as an Orthodox rabbi at the age of sixteen and then sent to Auschwitz, where he survived as a runner. One day Rabbi Ha-Livny—or Rabbi Weiss, as he was called in those days—was running and he saw a concentration-camp guard eating a sausage. He quickly saw that the sausage was encased in what seemed to be Hebrew letters. He looked again and he realized it was a part of a *blat*—a page of *Gemara*—a fragment of a page of Talmud. He ran to the guard and begged him for permission to take that "casing". He got it, and for three years, every day in the barracks, he taught that *blat* over and over and over again so that people would remember there was a world outside the camp, with values, something to live for, something to believe in.

We have a lot of faith in our particular version of order. I, for example, am positive that God either speaks Hebrew or English. I can't think of any other possibility. Our ideas about politics, about economics, and social order are the right ones. The other people just haven't figured it out.

Peter Berger now conjures up a scene which will be familiar to every mother in the room. I'm sixty-nine, so I've forgotten what it's like, but my sons and sons-in-law will understand this very well, and I imagine the younger *hazzanim* will too. It's two in the morning, and your child wakes up and begins to cry and says, "Mommy, Daddy,

I'm afraid, there are monsters under the bed." Does this sound familiar? What is your technique in responding to this problem?

Reply from the floor:

You get in the bed.

Second reply from the floor:

You look under the bed.

Third reply from the floor:

Monster spray is very useful.

Dr. Wachs:

Well, Berger did something interesting. Berger hugged the child, he checked the child, and he put on the light. I thought that was interesting because it made me think of *B'reishit*, the Days of Creation. Order starts with *yehi or*. Berger hugged his child and said, "Don't worry, Daddy's here, the light's on; everything will be all right." Does that sound plausible? Berger says it is absolutely necessary that the child believes it. Unless the child has a deep faith in being, the child will not be able to grow up to become an adult. Well, says Berger, if we stick to the facts, everything will not be all right. If that child is fortunate, it will grow and mature and age, and someday that child will die. But Berger said, "I wasn't lying. It was not a loving lie. When I held onto that child and said don't worry, Daddy's here, everything will be alright, I was speaking from a deep sense that in the end the forces of order and purpose and meaning are more important and more lasting than the forces of chaos." And every time we insist on putting something in order, that is a signal of transcendence. It is a gesture of our own faith that life can be made orderly.

His second signal of transcendence is **play**. Berger says that when you play with ecstasy, the clock stops. It's no longer 11:20. It's the first act, or the second movement, or the third inning or the fourth kiss. We literally experience the passage of time differently when we play with ecstasy.

His third signal is **hope**. Berger says, don't underestimate hope. It is a powerful force in history. The doctor who pushes herself to the limit to try to keep somebody alive, the artist with AIDS who forces himself to complete a project, for them hope is very, very powerful. And if we're not willing to stand aside and watch somebody else die without doing everything we can, we are literally incapable—the brain cannot process—the notion of unawareness. That is, we know we're going to die but we cannot picture ourselves as not being aware. It's not within the brain. By the way, I think on one level, hope is a Jewish contribution to world culture because it is we who gave the world the concept of *Mashi'ach*. And what is *Mashi'ach* but the hope that someday things will be better. So we have order, play and hope.

His final signal of transcendence is **rage**. He holds up two pictures I think we've all seen. The first is from the Shoah: a mother holds her daughter in her arms, face pressed against the mother's breast, so that the child will not see what we see when

we look at the picture, which is the German soldier who is about to cut them both down. And the second picture is from the Vietnam War. A man stands next to what seems to be a 12-year-old boy; he has a gun pressed against his head and is about to blow his brains out. And Berger says, "When I see those two pictures, I'm totally enraged. It is so totally unacceptable that I cannot believe that a person can commit an obscene act and never have to stand in judgment. There has to be a time and place where people are judged for such behavior."

The Talmud has its own three signals of transcendence, three foretastes of the World to Come: the warmth of the sun, the delight of Shabbat, and *tashmish*. It then asks, "What is *tashmish*?" One rabbi says its love, its sex. Another rabbi says it's regularity. And I think it's an intergenerational argument. I believe that all human beings are naturally spiritual, because I believe that all healthy religion (and let's admit it—religion can be toxic too—) begins with one question. And that question is, *lamah*? You know enough Hebrew to recognize that it has two words for "why," and they do not mean the same thing. *Madua* is a question that seeks causality. What caused this to happen? *Madua* looks backward to the past for a cause. *Lamah* is teleological: *lemah* ("for what?"); it looks to the future. What is the meaning, what is the purpose of this? And I believe that we are programmed by God to ask the *lemah* question.

I think Victor Frankel demonstrated that very eloquently in his marvelous book, *Man's Search for Meaning*. When your basic biological needs are met and you don't have to spend every minute of the day trying to feed yourself, the *lemah* question will assert itself in a normal person: What's it all for? And if you grew up in a home in which people did not ask the *lemah* question, there comes a time when you can't dodge it anymore, and that's when somebody close to you dies. At that point all of us find ourselves asking the *lemah* question. What is it for? What does it mean?

When we speak about spirituality we are really talking about one of five things. And here I'm indebted to my friend and colleague, Professor Hanan Alexander. Spirituality refers to either meaning and purpose, identity, community, morality, or transcendence. If you look at the literature on spirituality you'll find it's one of the five. What is common to all those things is *depth*, the deep part of life. I'm now borrowing partly—and building upon—the work of Professor Neil Gillman, who has said that there are three types of authentic Jewish spirituality. Lots of people use the word spirituality. People use the word spirituality in lots of loose ways. Gilman argues for three, I argue for five. Five forms of authentic Jewish spirituality means that each of them is built on a classical prototype.

The first is **pietistic**: *hashamayim mesaprim k'vod El*. This is also Buber. It is the awesomeness, the ineffability, the being blown away. By the way, may I give you a good question? What happened to the author of this prayer? Every prayer is a literary response to a human experience. When Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel spoke about *spontaneous* prayer, he called it the prayer of *expression*. Something happens to you, and you express your reaction in your own words. But when Heschel spoke about the *liturgical* he called it the prayer of *empathy*. A very interesting name. I understand him to mean that the task of the *davener* is to empathize with the author of the prayer. And I find it very helpful to ask the question, "What happened to the author of this prayer, has

it ever happened to me?" and then to try and relive that experience—both as it took place and as you wish it had taken place—to relive it in a way that would make more sense for your life.

The second form of authentic Jewish spirituality is **behavioral**. I know that in my family, blessing our children on Shabbat Eve was a very good example of a deep spiritual moment, because as all of you know, when you put your hands on the head of your children or your grandchildren and you touch them you are saying things you cannot possibly put into words. That can be deeply meaningful.

The third form is **social action**. I can tell you that from personal experience. My late wife Barbara taught for many years at the Akiba Hebrew Academy in suburban Philadelphia. While she was there she organized the Social Action program, the centerpiece of which was to prepare kosher food and to take it to the streets of Center City Philadelphia and to feed the homeless. It was very interesting, because the kids learned the laws of how you talk to people in a situation like that to preserve their dignity. They studied the *halachot*. In the beginning the kids dressed in a very nondescript manner. As weeks went on the boys began putting on *kipot* and the girls began putting on *kipot* and they began to wear their Akiba logo jackets. It became very important for them that they were going as Jews. And we know that because many of them chose to write about this experience in their college essays, that it was a key experience in their life. Social action can certainly be an occasion for spirituality.

The fourth form of authentic Jewish spirituality is **intellectual**. That was the regnant culture at the Seminary when I was a student. We had a teacher named H.L. Ginsberg, arguably the greatest Jewish Bible scholar in the world at that time. He would go on for forty minutes at a stretch to prove to us that certain word in *Ezekiel* really had an Akkadian root as opposed to a Samarian root. And I would sit there as a future Jewish teacher and say, "what am I doing?" Gilman points out quite correctly that for Ginsberg, getting to the *p'shat* was his way of getting to God. Understanding the true intent and context of the text was his religious connection. That was the culture of the Seminary when I studied there in the 1950s.

Finally, there is the **aesthetic** form of spirituality, which originates in the Temple and then, interestingly enough, comes down to us *hazzanim*. In my studies of *piyyut* I learned that many of the *piyyutim* were written by *kohanim*. Of course you know that *piyyut* is essentially *hazzanut*. In Arabic the word for *piyyut* is *chazana*, and the original *paytanim* were all *hazzanim*. Many of them were also *kohanim*, and I realized that for those *kohanim* this was a way of reliving the tremendously deep spiritual experiences their great-great grandfathers must have had when they officiated in the *bet hamikdash*.

I repeat, **there are five forms of authentic Jewish spirituality: pietistic; behavioral; social action; intellectual; and aesthetic**. I added the social action and aesthetic which I think are extremely important. By the way, there are a lot of jokes about rabbi/cantor relationships. I want to tell you there is something very deep under that, and it's more than personality clash. There is tension between these models of

spirituality. If you ever watched Dr. Heschel do an *aliyah* at the Seminary, you saw standing next to him one of the greatest Jewish scholars in history, Saul Lieberman. And you also saw the discomfort that Lieberman exhibited while Heschel was doing the *aliyah*, because when Heschel did an *aliyah* it was serious. And for Lieberman this was something you simply do, it's *halachah*, it's something required, but you don't take five minutes to do an *aliyah*. So there is tension between these various forms of spirituality. And that's why it's so important that we get to a deeper level, so these tensions can dissipate. Obviously, the *hazzan* can participate in each of them, but I suggest we can offer leadership particularly through the intellectual, the behavioral and the aesthetic forms.

To lead intellectually, one has to know the liturgy well. First, there is the simple level of skills. My business is education, and a key term in education is **curriculum**. On the simplest level, curriculum means a plan. I want to submit to you that we formulate a curriculum for services, and I want to tell you a story of success. My late wife was a scholar-in-residence in a synagogue in Wilmington. It was a late Friday evening service. I was amazed to discover that the congregation was able to chant and read big chunks of the liturgy in Hebrew. Not just the *Ve'ahavta* or *Magen Avot*, but big chunks of *Kabbalat Shabbat*. So after the service I went over to the *hazzan*, gave him a big *yeyasher kochacha* and said I'd never seen anything like it before. He said, "Well I really have to share credit with the rabbi." I asked him to tell me about it. He said, "A number of years ago the rabbi came to me and said, 'Hazzan, I don't want to have an audience. I want to have a congregation. They will then appreciate *hazzanut* even more.' I said, 'So how can we create a congregation?'" He said, "This year I want you to do the *Kiddush* identically every Friday night. Don't change a note, just during this year."

By the end of that year--of course--the whole congregation had learned the *Kiddush*. Remember that a significant percentage of the congregants are aural learners. They can only learn what they hear. That's why Sephardic kids know the liturgy by the age of ten, because everything is done out loud in the Sephardic service. At the end of the year that *hazzan* was free to alternate between the known version and more elaborate versions. What did they do next? They read *Hashkiveinu* out loud every Friday night for a year. Imagine what you can do over a ten-year period. That's a curriculum. A curriculum says, "Where's my congregation now and where do I want them to be in June?" And I would suggest to you that what is true for adults is also true for teenagers. One of the reasons teenagers tune out is because we only teach them a kind of shortened Junior Congregation version of the prayers. Instead we should be doing every paragraph out loud, the way we do *Ve'ahavta*. Why continue with *Vehayah Im Shamo'a* silently? Guess what. When the rabbi says, "The next two paragraphs are done silently", fifty percent of the congregation just shuts down. That's what I mean by a curriculum. So it seems to me on the basic level we need to teach the skills and I don't know any other way to teach them then by just giving people the opportunity to read them.

I want to go beyond skills. Ladies and gentleman, I'm about to use a word you're not going to like, but it's the right word. The liturgy is **censored**. Unlike the Midrash, unlike the Mishnah, unlike the *Gemara*, where many different points of view

can be shared, nothing got into the *Matbei'a Shel Tefillah* that contradicted the basic beliefs of the Pharisees and later the rabbis who shaped what we call Judaism. If you see a statement in the Midrash, where one rabbi expresses an opinion about the nature of life or the body or love—one of the great questions—and you ask yourself, “is this idiosyncratic of that individual or is it really what *Cha'za"l* as a body believed,” The place to look is in the liturgy. If it's there, it has passed the censor.

What an irony. Here are sets of words edited with exquisite care, and the vast majority of our people come into the synagogue and barely look at the words. Most people read only two things in their lives. They read love letters and they read contracts. That's what I mean by reading. It seems to me that our preparation has to include serious study of the liturgy. And we can ask the questions that are asked of any piece of literature: what's it say; what's it mean; how do I feel about it? You know words have consequences. Here's a very important question. At this moment in my life if I took these words seriously, what difference would it make? That's the question to ask ourselves and to give to our congregants to ask themselves. Heschel taught us that it's not a race. If you're doing part of the service and a word leaps up at you out of the page and you're sitting in the congregation, stay with it. Think about it. And meditate upon it.

So it seems to me that part of the intellectual leadership we have to give is to be reading with meaning, and that means that our preparation should include serious study of the liturgy as a book of values, ideas and beliefs. In Gratz college where we have a program to prepare *hazzanim*, the students take six or seven courses in liturgy because we feel it's extremely important that they really know what questions to ask when they have a text in their hands.

A number of years ago a man came into my office—a man with a magnificent voice—who at that time was a *hazzan* in Philadelphia and not a member of the Assembly. And he was crying. He said to me, “My rabbi and my congregation think of me only as a voice.” The man had a great voice, but he felt that he commanded no respect, because authority in the end rests on knowledge. And if we want to be thought of as more than a voice we have to know the liturgy better than anyone else in the congregation. That's the area of Judaism where we must be expert. A *hazzan* who can teach a prayer and help the congregants understand its content and relate to it will be respected.

Let's talk about **aesthetic spirituality**. It's no secret that people who sing together often feel a sense of transcendence. We can create those moments. I think Shlomo Carlebach's music has the kind of honesty to it and the kind of beauty to it that is grabbing lots and lots of people. Chanting brief sections to Carlebach *niggunim* will reflect the numinous. My particular gripe is the *Kedushah*. If you have read about the history of the *Kedushah* you will know that one of the reasons we do it in a *minyan*—and this is going to sound like a crazy analogy—is a little bit similar to why people who experimented with LSD used to do it in the company of other people. Because it was so powerful and the consequences were so unknown, they were afraid to be alone. We do the *Kedushah* in a *minyan* because we want to make sure we can have this moment of normal mysticism and yet get through it. We frequently treat the *Kedushah* as an occasion to sing ditties: *kadosh, kadosh, kadosh hashem tseva'ot*, etc. Think of those

words. We had a beautiful Shacharit service where I grew up, and I noticed that even with the need to complete the whole *chazarah*, the *sha"ts* managed to find one or two places in the service where he truly tried to express those words in all of their grandeur and all of their meaning. What better place than the *Kedushah*? Let the congregation feel the mystery of Isaiah 6:3 and the mystery of Ezekiel 3:12 and the mystery of Psalms 146:10. Go back to those texts and look at them. Remember that prayers are a kind of Midrash on the Bible.

Let me say a word about **intertextuality**. Heschel used to say, "To be or not to be, that is not the question. *How* to be and how not to be, that is the question." Heschel of course assumed that we knew Hamlet. He also assumed that Shakespeare was engaging in a bit in intertextuality because back in the sixteenth century if you were one of those few people who got to go to the university, you had to write essays. And one of the standard essays was: To Be or Not to Be. So when the actor playing Hamlet looks out and sees those dons from Oxford and Cambridge sitting in the audience, he had a chuckle at their expense. There's also a lot of intertextuality in the Siddur. And it seems to me that our musical and vocal interpretation is going to be strengthened if we go back to the original context for the three basic *Kedushah* responses.

I want to talk about another example of aesthetic spirituality, and again it's a personal experience. When I was twelve years old my mom took me to a Bar Mitzvah in Chester, Pennsylvania. The *hazzan* there had trained the Bar Mitzvah boy to do the *musaf*. We had never seen this before. This was in 1944, before most of you were born. My mother said to me, "If he can do it, you can do it." So she went to our *hazzan*, who later became a very distinguished member of the Assembly, and who has since passed away. His name was Joseph Mann, one of the great *hazzanim* of Philadelphia when I was growing up; and she asked the cantor if he would train me to do the *musaf* at my Bar Mitzvah. He said yes. The rabbi agreed and then being a very intelligent man he approached all of the other Bar Mitzvah boys that year and convinced them that they should form a choir which would sing at my Bar Mitzvah. And because they would learn the entire *musaf* service while training, each of them would officiate at his own Bar Mitzvah.

Now picture a bunch of twelve-year-old boys standing around a *hazzan*, and the bonding that took place during that year. I want you to know that of that group there are today people who are educators and rabbis and a cantor and some very good *balebatim*, because the rabbi recognized that teenagers have a need for mastery of a skill. For some of us it is the aesthetic form of spirituality which is most powerful. And I know there are people sitting here who know this very well and have been very successful at this. I am thinking of Alan Michaelson—*olav hashalom*—surely one of the great artistic cantors of the 20th century. There are at least a dozen rabbis today who became rabbis they will tell you because they stood next to Alan Michaelson on Shabbat morning at congregation Adat Ari El in Los Angeles. Don't underestimate your power to touch the young. For those boys and girls who have a certain gift, a certain natural ability, the most spiritual thing they can do is to watch you and to sing with you. That is a point that I really wanted to stress.

I want to finish with a slogan, and I think it's an important one. You cannot come to terms with something as a professional until you first come to terms with it as a human being. The first question I ask myself when I teach a prayer or when I'm going to *daven* is, "What does this prayer mean to me? What are the memories that it evokes? Who are the people that it reminds me of? What does it make me feel?" Let me share a personal experience with you. A few years ago my wife died in a very tragic accident. There were two things that got me through that experience. The first was a Midrash in *B'reishit Raba* which depicts God as crying for seven days before the flood. The second was something in the *Gemara*.

You know that the Amidah begins with the words *ha'eil hagadol hagibor ve'hanora*, and you know that's a *pasuk* from the Book of Deuteronomy. The *Gemara* knows the Bible very well and notes that when the Prophet Jeremiah uses the same phrase he omits the word *nora*. He says *ha'eil hagadol hagibor* and he does not add *vehanora*. And the Prophet Daniel later omits the word *gibor*; he says *ha'eil hagadol vehanora* and stops there. The sages want to know why, and they give the following answer. God is *gadol*, God is *gibor*, God is *nora*. But God is also patient, and in His patience He waits for the wicked, because *nora* means both "awesome" and "awful;" theological problem; theological answer. That should have been the end of the matter, but it isn't. The *Gemara* goes on to ask, "How could they do it?" And the answer is, "Because they knew that God wanted the truth." *Chotamo shel Hakadosh Baruch Hu: emet*; God's mark is Truth. What do we want from a friend? We want support and we want honesty. And *Cha"za"l* understood that what God wants from us is no less. Sometimes the question, the doubt, even the anger, is sacred. And so I knew as I sat and pondered this totally unexpected tragedy that I could be angry, that I could ask my questions and not feel guilty.

The contract that the congregation has with us does not state that we should have no problems, no questions. I got a wonderful education at the Seminary and the Cantors Institute, but there was one thing missing that I suspect is probably present there now. During my six years in the Teachers Institute and Cantors Institute I do not remember having a discussion with my teachers about whether I had any spiritual problems, any theological questions. Somehow it was assumed that I had found all the answers on my own. That was a mistake. You cannot come to terms with something as a professional until you come to terms with it as a human being. What I think we need to do is do what the rabbis are doing very successfully, holding regular retreats where we can sit down together, roll up our sleeves and help each other struggle with the really tough theological questions that we all have.

Thank you very much.

The Future of American Synagogue Music

Hazzan Henry Rosenblum, Dean of the H. L. Miller Cantorial School, NY;

Hazzan Ira S. Bigeleisen, Adat Ari El, Valley Village, CA

Hazzan Henry Rosenblum:

This is a very significant time for all of us. We're at a crossroads as we enter the 21st century. **We're trying to bridge a lot of different time periods**, a lot of different places in our heads and in our hearts, and it's very complicated. If you listened to the concert last night you heard music of the 19th century, which in its time was new. Today you'll hear music of the 20th century, which in its time was considered **very new**. **How much of what was do you continue to take with you?** Do you take a charge from a Charles Davidson who said, "Composers, keep writing; but don't let go of the thread that holds us together: the traditional *Nusach*"?

How much of the power that exists in contemporary American music—including contemporary Church music—do we find in synagogues? We are certainly lagging behind. One often hears more in the silence than in the sounds. I know what I connect with as a musician and as a person who's looking for spirituality in today's world, and I really feel split. When it comes to *daven'n*, I'm a traditionalist; how do I live in both of those worlds? And I'm not alone. So how do you who are in pulpits take people for whom covering all of *matbei'a shel tefillah* is critical, and expose them to the contemporary mantra-like praying of a few words over and over again that we heard today, knowing that they may never get to *daven* their Amidah? Or if they do, it will only be after they spend an hour in *Pesukei Dezimra*, which—as we have seen—can also serve an incredibly important purpose. Yet the people who are trying to recite the Shacharit service proper *kedat uch'din* are going to feel very uncomfortable by the time they reach the Amidah.

The first time you attend a "Carlebach" service or a "B. J." service or a service at "Yakar" in Jerusalem, if you have a particular mindset of what *tefillah* ought to be, there's great conflict within you. How do you bridge those different worlds? And in truth **I think the answer stands at our *shtender***. We have to take the very best of every one of those models that is out there and find a way of being the magician who holds it all together. I don't have the answers. I left the pulpit and now I'm trying to run a school. But I'm intensely aware of the need to go out there and try to touch people where they want to be touched, where they need to be touched, and in so doing to also grow through the experience.

So as opposed to being a brief for any particular model, these introductory remarks are more of a stimulus for us to broach—and to share—ideas concerning where things might be headed as we enter the 21st century. For instance: can what we heard today exist without instruments? What about those synagogues that are not prepared to allow instrumentation on Shabbat? There's always the alternative of a Carlebach service with its choreographed music from start to finish where at times Kabbalat Shabbat does not need a *hazzan* at all but is rather a pre-set notion of which tune will follow which tune, and if that tune happens not to reach the end of that *keta*, only then does the *sheli'ach tsibbur* actually get to chant a few precious words before everyone is off and

running again. Or consider whether the B. J. service will work in your *shul*. The first time you experience it, it seems to have incredible spontaneity. But once you examine it you see just how tightly choreographed it too is!

But every one of those services--every one of those models--works for a lot of people. And every one of them won't work for a lot of other people. The question is, can we incorporate contemporary settings into traditional *daven'n*? Is there a way of using those effective but off-beat modern melodies without their accompaniment? Can we perhaps transcribe or rearrange the instrumental lines for our choirs to provide a similar beat, either with words broken up into syllables or with nonsense syllables, like a hopped-up chasidic *nigun*? Can any of these new tunes serve to introduce sections of cantorial chanting, or would it work better if the *hazzan's nusach* led into the tune? Or could the rhythmically catchy new tune be rewritten as a *nigun* which would evolve into hazzanic recitative which could then be punctuated by the new tune in its original form, at irregular intervals?

What I'm asking is, how do we take the best that each genre has to offer and mold it into something that can make *tefillah* in the 21st century as vital and as vibrant as we want it to be? It may mean redefining what our ultimate strengths as *hazzanim* are. So it's worth the effort if that will enable *Yiddishkeit* to stay alive for another generation or two or three or more. And with that as backdrop, I'll turn over the floor to someone who, after much wrestling with the same thoughts, has come up with a service format that—with some of the modifications I've just suggested—may be just right for many American synagogues today.

Hazzan Ira S. Bigeleisen:

The Past

When I was a child, I loved to join my parents at services. I grew up in a very small, traditional Conservative congregation. We had a part-time rabbi, lay cantors and lots of congregational singing. However, I have to admit, I didn't really understand much about what was going on and I was often frustrated and bored.

Now, as an adult, I find this style of service very comforting. It brings back memories of my childhood, of my family and of the community in which I grew up. I am the Cantor. I have worked hard to learn all about all styles of services, but the service I grew up with holds a special place in my heart. I think that most of us have a similar fondness of the services we experienced as children. We love the memory of them even if, at times, we found them frustrating and boring.

The services we attend in most American synagogues today were created to answer the needs of previous generations. They reflect the social status of the Jewish community where they were created as well the popular musical styles of their day. For example, the New Synagogue on Oranienburgerstrasse in Berlin was dedicated in 1867. It held 3,000 people and was a magnificent cathedral-style building. Services were conducted with cantor, choir and organ. They were full of dignity and beauty with music composed by the famous Louis Lewandowsky. The building and the service spoke of the newly found wealth and stature of German Jewry in the 19th century.

When I speak to Jews who grew up in pre-war Germany, this is the style of service they love.

The question is: are these older service styles really appropriate for American Jews in the 21st century? What about the service and music written for 16th-Century Spanish/Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam? Is this right for American Jews today? How about services from 9th Century France, or Babylonia in 500 B.C.E., or 19th-Century Warsaw?

Our answer must be: yes – and no.

The Present

On the one hand, we live in a very unusual time and place. American Jews have immigrated from all over the world, bringing with them their liturgical traditions developed over hundreds (or even thousands) of years. Each of these traditions speaks of the life of the Jews where they were created. Were their lives hard and full of pain, oppression and suffering, or did they live as equal citizens with rights and liberties like the rest of the populace? What was the popular music that they heard all around them? Which instruments were considered appropriate for worship? Was the community permitted to build a synagogue on a main thoroughfare or were they confined to a small room hidden on a dark alley?

All of these factors influenced the creation of a worship style for each Jewish community that was unique, valuable and authentic. Each has a place in 21st-Century Jewish/American worship because we, like the rest of America, are a community of immigrants with traditions and customs from all over the world. It is a rich variety that makes America (and American Jewry) great!

On the other hand, services and music which spoke to communities in other places and times don't necessarily speak to our lives here and now. Just as the liturgy evolved to meet our needs in the past, it must continue to evolve to meet our needs today. American Jews are the most successful diaspora community since the Golden Age of Spain. We are educated. We are prosperous. We are completely integrated into American society. Isn't Senator Joseph Lieberman proof enough? And let us not forget that we again have a Jewish state in the land of Israel after 2000 years. Enough said. What a cause for celebration!

For the last hundred years, American Jews have taken center stage in creating American popular culture: Arthur Miller; Leonard Bernstein; Irving Berlin; George Gershwin; Bob Dylan; Steven Spielberg; Neil Simon; Mel Brooks; Woody Allen – the list is endless. Today's American Jews want to take possession of this culture and integrate it into their Jewish lives just as Jews all over the world have done through the ages.

Twenty-first Century America is not 19th-Century Poland or 9th-Century France. In those periods, Jews lived in constant fear for their lives and their livelihoods. Their prayers and music reflected this reality, but the services which spoke to their lives and times are not a reflection of our lives and times. While we may be relatively secure physically, American Jews have different challenges: a society which is immensely wealthy, materialistic and impersonal; a culture which is filled with addictions to drugs, food, and sex; a populace with a common disregard for truth where a verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's printed on.

We live in a place and time where people are yearning for relationships built on trust and love; where they can find answers, not based on the latest opinion poll, but instead based on the opinion poll at Sinai, where God, the Eternal, is the one who gives the answers.

American Jews want to embrace American culture, but they want to preserve their past. They want to celebrate their position in American life. They need to feel connected to their people, their community and their God.

The Future

One Shabbat Morning is the name of a new, innovative Saturday morning service in Los Angeles at our congregation, Adat Ari El. Its music springs from a unique collaboration between one of America's most talented popular singer-songwriters, Craig Taubman, and some of the country's most renowned Cantors: Alberto Mizrahi (Anshe Emet Synagogue, Chicago); Patti Linsky (Ahavat Shalom, Los Angeles); and Ira Bigeleisen (Adat Ari El, Los Angeles). Together we are creating a fusion of contemporary American music with authentic Jewish liturgical traditions from all over the world.

One Shabbat Morning features a new emphasis in prayer. Some of the most creative rabbinic minds of our day are reexamining the traditional liturgy to create opportunities for spiritual growth for today's American Jews. This group includes: Rabbis Moshe J. Rothblum and Jonathan Jaffe Bernhard (Rabbis of Adat Ari El); Rabbi Richard Levy (Director of the Rabbinic Program at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles); and Dr. Ron Wolfson (Co-director of Synagogue 2000).

We think this is going to create something revolutionary, a new American style of Sabbath morning worship which will include: celebration; singing and dancing; learning and meditation; time for yourself, your family, and God.

One Shabbat Morning has been presented by Synagogue 2000 at a national convention for the Reform movement in Philadelphia, and will be presented in workshop by the Los Angeles Board of Rabbis in June 2001 as well as today's session at the Cantors Assembly, 54th Annual National Convention. In addition, *One Shabbat Morning* meets at Adat Ari El monthly, beginning at 9:00 a.m. for an informal study session, and integrated with a Children's Shabbat Program (Nursery-school through Grade 3), also beginning at 9:00 a.m.

The Principles

Worship services are a chance to celebrate life and confront our vulnerabilities together with the community, which supports us in good times and bad. They offer a chance to grow spiritually; they are a chance to come into contact with the source of our higher selves. We call that source, God.

American Jews know how to think, but they don't know how to pray. To pray means to relinquish control. It means to reveal one's innermost thoughts and emotions. It means to allow oneself to be vulnerable.

Worshippers want to pray, but they don't want to go to school to learn how to do it. We need to engage them in ways that reveal the meaning and emotion of the prayers to them without being analytical and didactic.

Worship is a *right* brain activity. Music is a *right* brain activity. The worship service needs to be filled with music. Reading text aloud (including responsive reading)

is a *left-brain* activity. Don't do it in the service! Instead, *chant* the text in Hebrew or English, responsively or with a refrain. The music will engage the brain's right hemisphere.

Telling a personal story or describing how prayer affects you is emotional and gives worshippers a model of how to approach prayer. If the leaders of the service allow themselves to be vulnerable and admit to their own difficulties with prayer, this gives permission to the congregation to do the same. It's a first step toward real prayer.

Worshippers who do not really know the prayer book or how to *daven* (most of us!) need a model of how to say the words with *kavvanah* and *daven* with *nusach*. Whatever the prayer, every word of it needs to be chanted out loud so that people can learn how to recite (sing) it.

The service needs to have highs and lows, fast pacing alternating with slow pacing. People need time to celebrate and to meditate. This has to be planned consciously to work.

Worshippers can and will gladly listen to set pieces, but these need to be spread out during the service. Even then, we shouldn't have too many of them, and it's a good idea to provide a refrain that people can sing along with.

Texts that are sung need to be provided in both the original Hebrew, in transliteration, and in an accessible translation.

Worshippers like to know something about the prayers, but they are more interested in what they are supposed to accomplish emotionally with them. This is not an opportunity for a dissertation. Keep it short!

Give worshippers an opportunity to be part of making the music. Pass out shakers. People love them.

The hassidic style of repeating a melody over and over again releases us from the confines of rationality and allows our creative-emotional side to come into play. This can be used very effectively to help people pray. It takes a lot of energy to lead, so make sure you have partners to alternate with.

The service is a fancy word for the *act* of worship; it is *not* a discussion group *about* the act of worship. Discussion and learning can and should take place before or after the worship service.

People's Complaints

I can't get into prayers because I don't know Hebrew.

Everything is so slow and static.

I don't know the tunes.

I don't know how to pray.

I don't get anything out of praying.

I can't find God when I pray.

Prayer is not relevant to anything going on in my life.

The service is too long.

My kids can't sit still.

All the tunes sound so old fashioned. Can they sound more modern?

When I go to "modern" services it doesn't sound Jewish to me.

Our Responses

(Statements 1-3) Our philosophy is: do more of less. By repeating material numerous times there is a point in the process where a congregant can begin to develop a comfort level.

(Statement 4) The learning component of the service is vital to its success, for both the newcomers and the veterans. Teach something new every service so there is at least one communal learning experience. For those who are interested in more intensive study, offer a few midweek classes on the choreography of prayer.

(Statement 5-6) The *journey* section of **One Shabbat Morning** is an attempt to make the service more relevant and personal. Often people are empowered when they hear the personal struggles and triumphs of members of their community.

(Statement 7) Develop and utilize a questionnaire, which explores how your congregation is reacting to the service. The feedback is invaluable toward creating a relevant worship experience.

(Statement 8) Make the service shorter, or at the very least, change the setting and dynamics.

(Statement 9) Provide free childcare for those who need it, and strongly urge families to take advantage of it.

(Statements 10-11) **One Shabbat Morning** has accepted this as our primary challenge. Working closely with cantors, rabbis, creative artists and congregants, our goal is to create a liturgy that bridges the past with the present, as a model for the future.

The Follow Through

The clergy, lay and professional leaders of the synagogue are invited to a monthly study session on prayer. While the meeting is often difficult to fit into our schedules, everyone in attendance agrees that it is one of the highlights of the month. Because prayer is so personal and intimate, after every service we solicit and evaluate the suggestions of participants. Every month we try to incorporate these suggestions into our service. The service becomes a balance between *keva* (fixed prayer) and *kavvah* (spontaneous prayer). Because prayer is also an art, before every service the service leaders get together to practice and rehearse new material. We come to each service prepared to do our best. Because prayer must involve a community the publicity is top notch. The outreach is classy. The connection is personal. Every communication is done with integrity and sensitivity. Before each service we make phone calls, send e-mails, and mail postcards to friends and congregants, inviting them to services. We pay attention to every detail. How are the chairs set up? How is the sound, food, translations? How are the meters and greeters, *siddurim*, *shakers*, lighting, room temperature? We look at each service as an opportunity to create a holy moment. While having exceptionally high expectations, we take nothing for granted.

The Details

Develop a "greeting group" that is responsible to welcome people as they arrive at services and can assist during the service. This group will be the core of your community and set the spirit and tone of the service. Urge them to smile, be gracious, say *Shabbat Shalom*, assist with page numbers and in general help people feel comfortable and welcome. Have the staff meet the congregation outside prior to the service. Introduce yourself by name and if possible introduce them to someone else

nearby. Many, if not most, American Jews don't speak Hebrew! Design, develop, print and use a transliteration book along with your *siddur*. And during the service, my Aunt Ruth used to say that God gave us two ears and one mouth so that we would listen twice as much as we speak. This is a good rule of thumb; reduce the talking to a minimum, and sing...sing...sing!

Start on time. Make the service special and unique to your congregation. We dance during our *Friday Night Live* services because people want to dance. Create your group's own unique expression. Create quiet, private *daven'n* moments to compliment the group singing.

Be a good role model. Sing, clap, daven, dance. Do whatever it is that makes you feel good. Be spontaneous! The guys in the accompanying band often say, "I never do the same thing once". While repetition is comfortable, change is an exciting and a necessary part of the prayer experience. Carefully choose a balance between the *keva* and the *kavvanah* parts of your service.

During the service, walk through the congregation and among your congregants. When possible, stand in the middle of the hall and have everyone face the center of the room. Plan the unexpected and expect the unplanned. For example, you choose the wrong key, break a string or the sound system goes out, use these as opportunities to celebrate the moment. It is when you are caught off guard and choose to think on your feet that you capture the energy and make the moment. There is nothing bad about things that are wrong. They are just not going the way you had planned. All it takes to make it right is a good attitude and knowing the orientation of your group. Be confident enough to know that you can (and will) make mistakes. And of course, be prepared. Know the text, the chords, the arrangement, the melody, the mood, the translation and your congregation. And know that even though you think you know, there is still more to know.

Create a warm environment. Move chairs in close, dim the lights, set the heat or air conditioning to a comfortable level, move down from the *bimah* to the congregation using one small podium for both Rabbi and Cantor. Treat your synagogue environment like you would your home. Keep your announcements short, and if possible eliminate them altogether. By doing this you have made a keen distinction between the sacred service and the mundane everyday announcements. Enjoy, smile, laugh and be present in the moment of Shabbat.

The Life and Music of Israel Alter
Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of His Birth
Hazzan Benjamin Z. Maissner, Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto, ONT;
Mr. Akiva Zimmerman, historian and author, Tel Aviv, Israel

Hazzan Benjamin Maissner:

In his book *B'ron Yachad*, my friend Akiva Zimmermann calls my dear uncle Yisrael Alter “The Lion in the Pack” (*ha'ari shebachavurah*). How shall we here today think of him, as *Herr Oberkantor*, Cantor Alter, Hazzan Alter, *Reb Yisrael*? Should we refer to him in our own minds as the Dean of Cantors, a Hazzan's Hazzan, a liturgical genius, a composer and arranger, a pedagogue and teacher or a *talmid chacham*? For indeed he was all these things, he possessed all the above qualities, and more. He was a giant in the field of *hazzanut*, the royal among royalties of our sacred profession. He was a master of every nuance in *tefillah*, a role model to his peers and a shining light to his many students—men and women—stretching over decades.

He left his mark upon all of us through his meticulous manuscripts, documented so skillfully in the anthologies of *nusach* commissioned by the Cantors Assembly. These cherished treasures have formed a foundation for teaching the basic skills of leading *tefillah* in every accredited cantorial school. There is not a serious student of *hazzanut* who does not hold Alter's doctrine in the highest regard and admiration for its accuracy, imaginative color, and unexpectedly fresh appeal.

Cantor Alter combined a magnificent God-given vocal instrument that was unique in its color and timbre, with his own thrilling temperament. Both Akiva Zimmermann and I were asked to pay tribute to his memory at this session. With the comprehensive knowledge that Akiva possesses about the life and achievement of every *hazzan*, he will paint for you a more vivid biographical picture of Alter's career, fleshing out the legendary figure with historical and critical data. I'd like to provide some personal recollections of my Uncle Israel, and they can be divided into three phases of my life: infancy, adolescence, and adulthood.

My earliest childhood memories of him date from 1947-1949, the years he officiated in Jerusalem's Yeshurun Synagogue. His daughter Clara, my beloved cousin who is here with her own daughter Tziviah, always reminds me of my baby talk at the time. Unable to pronounce *Srukli*, I would say, *Dod Luku, nisht tshimfn* (Unka Uku, don't be angry?). Why? Because his granite-like face always looked to me like he was cross! But he was not. This was simply the period when my childish awe of him developed.

By the time of my Bar Mitzvah, Uncle Alter's imprint on my life was overwhelming, mainly because of my aspiration to be like him. I dreamed of emulating his style, his voice, and his charisma, to the detriment of my own self-identity. Trying to pattern myself after the patriarch of our family—a titan among men—was an impossible dream. I wanted to sound like him, to be famous and admired like him. I remember his warm hands and strong arms holding me while we walked home together from the BILU School in Tel Aviv where I had sung for *Kabbalat Shabbat* services in the choir led by Hazzan Shlomo Ravitz, one of Alter's great admirers. I was confused

by the contrast between my uncle's hugs and kisses and his silence about my singing. Could it possibly mean approval?

The third phase of our relationship began in 1965 when I arrived in New York to attend the Hebrew Union College's School of Sacred Music, where Alter taught. It was not easy, and I do not mean the School. I flew through the five-year program in two years, over his objections. He said to me: *kindt leben, az men lernt finf yor, ken men gornisht; az men lernt tzvei yor, veis men noch mehr vi gornisht* ("dear child, if we study for five years, we know nothing; if we study for two years, we know even more than nothing")!

I lived with Cousins Clara--and Abe--Feldman (of blessed memory), and Aunt Hannah-- and Uncle Israel--Alter. That part was good, comfortable and warm. But then I asked, "when will I get to coach with you, Uncle *lebn*, to study, to learn how to do the *dreidlach*, to turn a phrase like you?" He answered, "Ven time comes and zey assign me to you, I vill teach you."

Not until the first Practicum of *Minchah/Maariv* for Weekdays did I hear a formal critique. Suddenly, everything started to fall into place. Every breath-mark, eighth-note, sixteenth-note, emphasis, turn and run, made sense to me. The written scores came alive as he demonstrated to me passion and pathos: *El Melech, Yoshev Al Kisei Rachamim from Selichot*; or *Melech Al Kol Ha'arets* in the Rosh Hashanah Kiddush, that little—but enormously significant transition from G major to G minor. I watched Alter tailor-make hazzanic anthologies as teaching material for his own students. He treated all of them—male and female alike—with the same respect and dignity. He tried to help all of us, his *talmidim*, with the same clarity of mind and the same commitment to the text.

Who can forget his trademark phrase, *die shtimmung, die shtimmung, main kindt* ("the mood, the mood, my child")! Nor can anyone who was there ever forget his magnificent rendition of *Acheinu Kol Bet Yisrael Hanetunim Batsarah* ("Our Endangered Brethren, the Entire House of Israel"), an improvisation that he had to repeat onstage—because of the unending applause—at a packed workshop for one of the early Cantors Assembly conventions. There was always a buzz about him, everyone who came into contact with him felt a special quality that could not be put into words.

To some he seemed perhaps a bit distant, above everything. He had a right to be that way, for he had no use for small talk. He was profoundly learned, and that knowledge was reflected in his singing, the epitome of *Hazzanut Haseder*. Yet his distinctive interpretation and awesome voice managed to tinge that Western European dignity with the emotional yearning of Eastern European *Hazzanut Haregesh*. His piety shines through the golden sound, and his thoughtful phraseology makes the prayer text's hidden meaning come alive. May the heritage he left us serve as an inspiration throughout our careers, as we pursue the same the same noble calling.
Yehi zichro baruch.

Mr. Akiva Zimmerman:

Thanks to Almighty God, I am again with you, dear colleagues, paying tribute to the memory of cantors and personalities who influenced *hazzanut* and Jewish Music in past generations. I was privileged to meet some of the well known *hazzanim* of our generation, one of whom was the great *hazzan* and scholar, Israel Alter.

This convention is the first one in the 21st century, and Alter was born at the beginning of the 20th century. In May 1962 Hazzan Alter addressed a session of the 15th annual convention of the Cantors Assembly. Professor Max Wohlberg was chairman of the session. He gave Alter a gracious introduction.

"The name of Israel Alter was known to us when he was still in Hannover. He had combined within himself the learning of the west, the scholarship of the east, the system of modern Western European music and the inspiration and the warmth of Eastern Europe. He was what we call a *musmach* in *hazzanut*. And Alter was also a gentleman of the highest caliber, a highly revered and beloved individual."

As a fitting introduction to my lecture today, I would like to add some personal remarks from someone in whose family Alter's name was a household word. That individual was a boy growing up in Hanover during the 10 years that Israel Alter served as cantor there. The boy--Ismar Schorsch--grew up to become chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and he included his remarks about Alter in the Cantor Samuel Rosenbaum Memorial Lecture, delivered in June 1998 at the Cantors Assembly Convention in New York City. Professor Schorsch's father was rabbi of the synagogue in Hannover where Alter was *hazzan*. The synagogue seated over 1,500 people, and Alter's voice easily filled that large sanctuary.

I never heard Alter sing, having known him only in his last years. But I did have the privilege of spending many hours with him whenever he came to the land of Israel. I was also the last to record an interview with him one month before his death, when I visited him in New York. My definition of Alter is borrowed from the Hoshana Rabbah prayer; *Lema'an Tamim Bedorotav* which, among many other biblical figures, describes King David, the sweet singer of Israel.

*Lema'an chayach mecharker beshir,
hamelamed torah bechol kelei shir*

"O save us for the merit of one who brought you joy,
who taught Torah through every musical instrument."

Like David, Alter also taught Torah through a musical instrument: his magnificent voice, through which he articulated the loftiest spiritual concepts. His many compositions embodied the ideal of Torah study; based on *ivyun tefillah*--explaining the text--through music.

Like two of his friends, Leib Glantz and Moshe Ganchoff, Alter wasn't just trying to create something beautiful, expressive and meaningful, he was trying to get it right. His point of view was that before you write music for a prayer you have to study the text and understand its intent. In a letter written in June 1956, Leib Glantz addresses Alter as follows:

"To the *Hazzan* who exalted in his humanity. and in the holy fire

that lights his heart-the *Hazzan* who honors me by considering me his friend and by allowing me to warm myself in the glow of his flame."

Alter was born at Neilah time on Yom Kippur of 1901 in Lemberg, then the capital of East Galicia, in upper Austria, today part of the Ukraine. His was a family of celebrated rabbis and distinguished scholars, among them Rabbi David ben Samuel Halevi (1586-1677), known as the *Taz*, an acronym for his well known book of *halachah*, *Turei Zahav*.

Israel Alter grew up in an ultra-hassidic home. His father, Avraham Yehudah (1865-1943), was a leading figure of the Lemberg community. One of Israel's brothers, Rabbi Moshe Elchanan (1889-1941), headed the Lemberg Bet Din, and to him Israel later dedicated his composition *Veha'arev Na* ("Sweeten the Words of Your Torah in Our Mouths"). Another brother, Shmuel, was a well known rabbi in Vienna, Cuba, and New York. He authored twenty-four scholarly works, including *Likutei Batar Likutei* ("Gathering upon Gathering"), a collection of Midrashic material drawn from the Pentateuch and Mishnah Avot. Israel called Shmuel *achi, mori* ("my brother, my teacher"), and dedicated the composition *Modim Anachnu Lach* ("We Thank You") to him.

Another brother, Yehoshua, served as *hazzan* in the extremely Orthodox Lemberg synagogue *Turei Zahav*, of which only one wall remains standing today. Yehoshua composed music for the Shabbat table-song, *Kol Mekadesh shvi'I* ("All Who Sanctify the Sabbath") that is still sung in the court of the Hoshiatiner *hassidim*. Israel recorded Yehoshua's composition for *Hashkiveinu* ("Cause Us to Lie Down in Peace"), and later dedicated his own composition for *Habet Mishamayim* ("Look down from Heaven") to Yehoshua's memory.

He dedicated his *Ribono Shel Olam* ("Master of the Universe") for the Omer counting to the memory of his brother Binyamin Ze'ev, and *Le'olam Yeheh Adam* ("Man Should Always Fear God") to the memory of yet another brother, Shlomoh Zalman. To the memory of his sister Ettl he dedicated *Mi She'asah Nisim* ("The one who performs wonders"). He composed *Av Harachamim* ("May the Merciful Father Show Mercy to a People He Has Sustained") in memory of his other sister, Hinda, whose daughter-Hannah-became Israel's wife.

All of these family compositions are included in the first volume of *Shirei Israel*, published in Johannesburg 1952. The book also includes a composition from *Song of Solomon: Ani Yesheinah Velibi Er* ("While I Slumbered, My Heart Awoke"), dedicated to his wife Hannah, and arranged for voice and piano by the musicologist Shlomo Rosowsky. I remember Hannah, and am friendly with her family in Israel. When she passed away Israel Alter told me, *s'iz avek di kroin fun main kop* ("my crowning glory is gone").

Alter developed a beautiful voice from early childhood. At the age of seven he was already called upon to *daven* locally in Lemberg synagogues. He was given a traditional Talmudic education in the *yeshivot* of Lemberg. His parents hoped he would follow in the family's rabbinic tradition, but he decided to devote himself to music. He moved to Vienna and was enrolled in the State Academy for Music and Art. He studied with two of Vienna's most distinguished *hazzanim*: Yitzhak Zvi Halperin, who had been cantor of the modern temple in Lemberg; and Yehudah Leib Miller, who later officiated in Haifa.

At 20 he assumed his first cantorial position at the Brigittenauer Temple-Verein Vienna, and served there for three years. In 1925 he became chief cantor of the *Synagogue Gemeinde* in Hannover, Germany, where he remained for 10 years. During these years he toured all the European cities with great success. He led services, concretized, started to record, and became famous all over the world. He toured the United States in 1929-30--when he gave his first two Carnegie Hall concerts--and returned in 1934.

In 1926, Alter made a series of recordings on Parlophon, a prominent German label. Those recordings disappeared from the market during the Nazi era, but masters of them turned up nearly two decades later. They have since been reissued in England by British EMI, and in the United States by Collectors Guild. The recordings reveal Alter's voice as "a tenor of generous volume and unusual range" (*New York Herald Tribune*, March 6, 1931)... "having immense power with an overwhelming passion" (*New York World*, March 24, 1934).

One of his most famous compositions was *Akavya ben Mahalalel*, from chapter three of *Pirkei Avot*. It was popularized through a recording by Alter's contemporary and partner on the 1929-30 tour, Moshe Kousevitzky. The music critic Menahem Kipnis says of the *Akavya* recording that it is *K'dat Moshe Veyisrael* ("according to the law of Moses and Israel: Moshe Kousevitzky and Israel Alter"). Alter once told me about how he came to write *Akavya*. While he was in Vienna there took place a world conference of the ultra-orthodox Agudas Yisrael organization. The most prominent Hassidic rabbis of that generation gathered in the conference hotel: the Tshortkover, the Sadegefer, the Boyaner, the Gerer, and others.

One of the rabbis recognized Alter and asked him to sing something. Alter decided to improvise the Mishnah, *Akavya*. In the midst of his singing he noted that one of the rabbis was crying. When he finished, the rabbi told Alter that though he had studied Mishnah for decades, never had he been moved to the point of confession and repentance as he had from Alter's interpretation. Immediately, Alter sat down and wrote out what he could remember of his improvisation.

With the Advent of Nazism in 1935, Alter left Germany to become *hazzan* of the largest synagogue in Johannesburg, The United Hebrew Congregation. He remained there until 1961, when as Cantor Emeritus, he left for New York. In the U.S. he devoted himself to composition and to a new career as instructor in Orthodox *Hazzanut* at the Reform Hebrew Union College's School of Sacred Music.

At the commission of the Cantors Assembly, he wrote musical settings for almost the entire liturgical year. For *Shabbat*, for *Shalosh Regalim*, *Selichot*, and *Yamin Nora'im*. Unfortunately he became ill and passed away before he could complete a setting of the weekday services. He also composed a large number of individual recitatives and choral pieces.

Alter was well versed in Hebrew as well as Yiddish literature, and composed many art songs in both languages. One of the most moving settings begins:

*Unter di poilishe grininke beimelech
shpiln zich mehr nit moishlelech, shlemelech
"Under the green trees of Poland,
Jewish children no longer play."*

Montreal's Council of *Hazzanim* published Part 4 of *Shirei Israel*, which includes: *Acheinu kol bet Yisrael* "Iyr Brethren, the Whole House of Israel." *Chasdei*

Hashem "God's Mercies;" *Mima'amakim* "From out of the Depths;" *Aneinu* "Answer Us;" *Akavya* "Akavya, son of Mahelalel."

Alter visited his family in Israel frequently, the first time in 1944. While there he at officiated in the Central Synagogue Yeshurun in Jerusalem, and there were negotiations to appoint him as Chief Cantor of Jerusalem. A special committee was formed of rabbis, scholars and writers, which tried--unsuccessfully--to bring him to Palestine. His daughter Clara still lives in Jerusalem, as do many of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. All of them remain strictly Orthodox.

It is interesting to note the wonderful relationship that Alter had with his rabbi in Johannesburg, Levi Izhak Rabinovitz. Alter told me that he and the rabbi continually influenced each other. Often he would improvise after hearing the rabbi's sermon, and just as often the rabbi would base his sermon on the way Alter had interpreted a particular prayer. At a memorial service held in Tel Aviv to mark the end of *Shloshim* (the first month of mourning following Alter's death), Rabbi Rabinovitz talked of the wonderful relationship between himself and Alter. He had been delighted to finally work together with a scholarly *hazzan*.

I want to recall Alter's association with the Cantors Assembly, which was a happy and productive one. He became a frequent guest at conventions, and participated four times in various panel discussions. His *Festival Service* was reviewed by *Hazzan* Lawrence Avery, and examples were sung by *Hazzan* David Lefkowitz at the 22nd annual convention. A memorial tribute to Alter was given at the 33rd convention.

Many of Alter's compositions were recorded by the Metropolitan Opera tenor, Jan Peerce. In Peerce's autobiography--*The Bluebird of Happiness* (written with Alan Levy)--Peerce refers to Alter as "a masterful cantor, a great musician and teacher with whom I once studied."

Alter maintained a wonderful friendship with Moshe Ganchoff, who sang and recorded some of Alter's compositions: *Atah Yatsarta* ("You Established Your World"); *Velirashalayim Ircha* ("Return to Your City"); and *Hashir Shehal'viyim Hayu Omrim* ("The Song the Levites Sang in the Temple"). Alter composed that recitative together with Ganchoff after the two of them had studied the text intensively. Ganchoff also recorded Baruch Schorr's Tisha B'Av lament, *Az Bahaloch Yirmiyahu al Kivrei Avot* ("When Jeremiah Walked among Our Ancestors' Graves") as notated by Alter, and recorded by him for a 1947 broadcast over Radio Jerusalem.

Alter told me that when Leib Glantz was invited to recite psalm 83 at a Holocaust memorial service he and Glantz first spent an entire day studying the Psalm's opening verse:

Elohim, al-dami lach, al techerash ve'al tishkot, Eil
"Keep not silent, O God, be not still, O Lord."

After Glantz's death in February 1964, Alter was an active member on the committee that published his late friend's music.

Without a doubt, every member of the cantorial fraternity worldwide can apply to Israel Alter the words of Isaiah, (49:3).

Yisrael, asher becha etpa'ar
"Israel, in whom I am glorified."

May he rest in eternal peace. Amen.

54th Annual Meeting

Regional Reports

Metropolitan New York Region

Hazzan Jeffrey Myers:

The Metropolitan New York Region of the Cantors Assembly is composed of nearly sixty *hazzanim*, serving congregations in the five boroughs of New York, Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Two major concerts were hosted this year, one in March by Sol Zim and one in November by Jeff Myers. Although the final tallies are not available as of this report, the approximate net donation to the Cantors Assembly was \$8,000. Several *hazzanim* participated in the second annual Long Island *Torathon*, which is an afternoon of study hosted by all wings of the Conservative movement. While most of the teachers were rabbis, our presence sent an important message to the community. A precedent-setting meeting was held in March, the first-ever joint meeting of members of the CA and the RA. After a short presentation from FECS on premarital counseling, the major program was a delightful dialogue by Sol Zim and his rabbi, Joe Simckes. They shared with us how rabbi and *hazzan* can work together. It was obvious to all in attendance that they have created the formula for a team that has mutual respect and admiration, and communicates well. As a matter of fact, they finish each other's sentences. They certainly gave all in attendance much to think about, and we thank them for their time. Two subcommittees have been set up concerning projects for the coming year: an area wide *Zimriyah* composed of youth choirs, and a day of study. We look forward to bringing these two projects to fruition.

Midwest Region

Hazzan Eric Weisser:

The Midwest region of the Cantor's Assembly continues to provide a meeting ground where colleagues can share ideas, programs and musical selections.

In addition to the monthly gatherings, our CA group has become an integral part of a larger guild, the Chicago Milwaukee Association of Cantors (CMAC). This group consists of cantors, soloists and musicians involved in maintaining the musical traditions of Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist synagogues.

Last Fall's program highlighted United Synagogue scholar-in-residence, Rabbi Ben Hollander, in a series of lectures. They were taught at a very high level and marked the first time in recent years that Cantors, Rabbis and educators studied text together.

This Spring promises to be equally exciting, featuring a special pre-convention session with *Hazzan* Alberto Mizrahi, and a *Yom Iyun* sponsored by the national CA office, with a guest scholar.

New England Region

Hazzan Stephen Dress:

The New England colleagues thank Charles Osborne for his years of dedicated service as Chairman of the region. During his tenure, the New England Region benefited by many concerts in a variety of cities and towns raising funds for the Cantors Assembly. The stature of the cantorate was elevated during this period in large measure due to Charles' successful efforts.

During this year of transition, the region is gearing up for an extraordinary event to be held at Symphony Hall in Boston this coming November 7th. Charles Osborne's musical setting of Elie Weisel's novel "*Souls on Fire*," with libretto by Aryeh Finklestein, will be presented as a major cultural and fund-raising event. Co-produced by Johanan Bikhardt and Lawrence Sandberg, Charles and Aryeh--together with their colleagues--are intending to produce this event, which will be narrated by Leonard Nimoy and feature conductor Joshua Jacobson and Boston's acclaimed Zamir Chorale. Newly elected chairman, Steven Dress, who spearheaded regional and CA efforts to support the Masorti Foundation, is pleased that this project will directly benefit both the Cantors' Assembly and Masorti Foundation with the support of Boston's Combined Jewish Philanthropies.

The region appreciates the financial support given directly to our Cantors Assembly national office from individual *hazzanim* including Robert Shapiro, Stephen Freedman, (who recently moved to Dresher, PA) , Morton Shames, Robert Scherr, and Steven Dress in connection with a celebratory 10th - anniversary concert at his congregation. *Mazel Tov* to our dean, Simon Kandler, upon his retirement after close to 60 years in Temple Emeth's pulpit! Simon is a model of strength and spirit. Thank you to colleagues who sang in tribute to Simon at his retirement concert. We already miss Stephen Freedman greatly, and wish him and his family well in the Philadelphia region. We thank outgoing national officers and extend our support and blessings of health and *hatslachah* to Sheldon Levin and his new administration.

New Jersey Region

Hazzan Ilan Mamber

The New Jersey Region has been quite busy, sponsoring a cantors choir which includes over thirty ACC members and unaffiliated colleagues who join forces with us at rehearsals and in performances at various synagogues and community events. Most of the proceeds from these concerts are donated to the CA to be used as scholarships for cantorial students. The concerts also give us an opportunity to foster a better understanding of *hazzanut*, choral music, and Jewish music in the community at large.

Last June we performed at the Conservative temple in Lakewood, as well as a most unique ecumenical concert at Seton Hall University sponsored by the American Jewish Committee. That interfaith concert included a Catholic choir and an Egyptian Coptic choir, and at the end of the concert, all three choirs came together to sing "*Amen Shem Nora*". This was a very special concert for our members, and it generated extensive and favorable public relations for us. In addition, we performed Chanukkah concerts at Temple Neve Shalom in Metuchen at the Daughters of Miriam Nursing Home in Clifton. We are presently rehearsing for our performance at the convention, as well as for a June concert in Lawrenceville. We already have performances scheduled for the 2001-2002 season.

This year we have added a new dimension, a series of performance/workshops at the various Solomon Schechter schools in New Jersey. The purpose is to expose day school students to modern and classical cantorial and Jewish choral music, as well as introduce the students to *hazzanim* who perform, teach, and conduct this music at synagogues throughout the state. The idea is to inspire some of the students to consider *hazzanut* as a profession. Our goal is to do three of these performances annually, and this year we will have performed at schools in Marlboro, Howell and West Orange. These concerts are offered to the schools at no cost and are scheduled during regular classroom hours. The performance/workshops have been very uplifting for us, since they allow us to perform and interact with an age group that would not normally come to our concerts. It has been a learning experience for us as well as for them.

Our group meets regularly almost every two weeks. Most of these sessions are used as rehearsals for upcoming concerts, but we also have a regular educational component integrated into our sessions. Last season, our annual Day of Study took place in February. As already reported at the last convention, it was cosponsored by the Philadelphia Region, and featured Velvel Pasternak as the guest speaker. In June, for our closing brunch, we featured three educational sessions conducted by our own *hazzanim*: a session on healing by Cantor Sheila Pearl, a session by Sam Weiss on Yiddish folksong themes in the liturgy, and a session on trope and cheironomy by Sheldon Levin. Barry Weinberg will lecture at this year's Day of Study in June.

Seaboard Region

Hazzan Kim Komrad:

The Seaboard Region has continued to be active this year, meeting bi-monthly, at a minimum. We enjoy an ever-increasing camaraderie among our members, and we use much of our time together to share ideas, be sounding boards for each other, support each other, and come up with strategies and solutions for solving problems which are unique to our profession as *hazzanim*.

We continue to alternate the location our meetings between the Baltimore area and the Washington, D.C. area, in order to facilitate and encourage the participation of our members from all over our region. Thanks to the generosity of our congregations, we have enjoyed visiting and conducting our meetings in synagogues throughout the region, who also furnish us with a lovely luncheon.

Generally, at each meeting, the host *hazzan* has shared with the group some aspect of his/her special area of expertise, such as adult education, counseling/preparing families of B'nai Mitzvah, organizing a choir, etc. We also had a presentation this year by CHANA, a Baltimore-area shelter for victims of domestic abuse. We have, however, devoted much of our time to preparing for and planning our recent concert.

We are proud to report that our concert was a smashing success. It was held on Sunday evening, March 4th, at Ohr Kodesh Congregation, in Chevy Chase, MD. Despite threats of a major snowstorm, the concert was sold out, with standing room only, and we raised substantial funds for the Cantors Assembly. Due to the dedication and talents of our members, we were able to produce a first-class event.

Response of the Newly Elected President *Hazzan* Sheldon M. Levin, Metuchen, NJ

With a great sense of humility and awe, I accept the responsibility of being the president of the Cantors Assembly. Our organization has come a long way from its beginnings 55 years ago, under the leadership of David Putterman, *z"l*, and a handful of visionary *hazzanim*. For over 40 year, we were shepherded by our outstanding leader, Sam Rosenbaum, *z"l*. The words of a recent song by contemporary composer, Doug Cotler, come to mind at this propitious moment: "I'm standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before me."

I have learned from previous presidents of the C.A. and with their help and input we will continue to guide our organization in a true path. Tonight, I remember Max Wohlberg, *z"l*, - one of my dearest teachers - and Yehuda Mandel, *z"l*, with whom I sang for many years - I remember their brilliance and ability to adopt European *hazzanut* to the needs of this country's worshippers. We recall the dedication of past-presidents like Moe Silverman and Gregor Shelkan who never tired of raising sums of money to support our worthy work. We thank Saul Hammerman and Ivan Perlman for their love of our colleagues and our profession, as well as for their great sense of humor and joy of being a *hazzan*. Kurt Silbermann, like other past-presidents, remains devoted to our organization - giving hundreds of hours as a volunteer to our important work.

I hope we will continue Sol Mendelson's legacy of creating new publications and envisioning creative new projects. Mort Shames' work on behalf of each of our members when they are changing positions deserves our kudos and thanks. In Isaac Wall, in whose shadow I literally grew as a teen and for 17 years as the cantor of the *shul* down the street from his, I see someone who always deserves great respect and brings the highest sense of ethics to everything he does.

The debt that the Assembly owes Abe Shapiro can never be repaid. He administers the finances and dealings of our organization with amazing devotion and care. We recall Abe Lubin's scholarship and Bob Kieval's organization and parliamentary skills. We applaud Nate Lam's ability to accomplish any goals for us he can dream. We are so proud of Henry Rosenblum who not only has led us well but now, as Dean of the H. L. Miller School, can continue to work together with us to train future generations of *hazzanim*.

I certainly can not forget Steve Stein who, in his few years as our Executive Vice President, has already built so many bridges with the R.A., United Synagogue, JTS, Men's Club and Women's League that will help us work together to strengthen our goals.

I hope I can follow in the footsteps of Chaim Najman, whose broad shoulders carried so many burdens of the C.A. and of our members. He never showed anger, he raised large funds for several major projects and always fulfilled the duties of the presidency with amazing diplomacy. It is my hope that I can bring what I have learned

from their strengths into my own presidency. I ask all of our past presidents to rise and for everyone to give them a rousing round of applause.

I will continue to call on your advice, guidance, criticism and continued hard work in these next two years.

I should also give thanks to several *hazzanim* who have been instrumental in my personal development. Marshall Wolkenstein was the cantor in the synagogue where I grew up from Jr. Congregation leader through my college years in his professional octet. Joe Levine taught me almost all I know of *nusach* and *hazzanut*. I thank my many voice teachers, including Leon Lissek with whom I now meet every week. I thank Mordy Goldstein whose model of being a hazzan, conductor and educator is now my pleasure to follow. I appreciate the many colleagues upon whose advice and help I rely so often, like David Tilman in Philadelphia, my new friends in the New Jersey Cantors Ensemble and everyone who shares their thoughts on Hazzanet. Special thanks to Laurie Rimland Bonn and Mitch Martin and everyone on the office, convention planning and management staffs who have worked so hard putting this convention together. I applaud and thank each of you.

I cannot forget my family. My mother, who is here tonight, always wanted me to be a lawyer. Mother, I hope you are proud of me now as a *hazzan*. My children of whom I am so proud and who always challenge me and make life so interesting – “I love you very much.” My most special thanks go to Nita, my wife. As I take more responsibility with the C.A., she needs to do more carpoos, homework help and other household obligations. She is my *ezer k'negdo* in the best sense of the term. I appreciate and love you very much.

I thank all my congregants, with special thanks to those who are here this evening, and especially Rabbi Zelizer, my partner on the Bimah. Our congregation is proud to have a past president of the R.A. and now a president of the C.A. I am lucky to be with such a great rabbi and wonderful *shul*.

When I studied for a Masters degree in Choral Conduction, I learned that a successful conductor must know more than the score and be able to wave his or her hands correctly. The true key is to get the best singers to want to follow the conductor and for them to sing as well as they possibly can. This presidency is not about me; it's about YOU and the future.

As we face the challenges of this new millennium, we will be successful only if you, the members of the C.A., take responsibility for yourself and our profession. We all need to make time to meet, study and sing with colleagues. We each need to organize concerts to raise funds for the Assembly and recruit students for JTS. We need to take time from our summers to connect with kids at Ramah camps. We must seek ways during the year to serve on local and national Federation and United Synagogue committees, to run Baal Tefillah courses in our regions and to teach Nusach and Trop at our Day Schools and afternoon Hebrew Schools.

We must, as an organization, increase our communications. Hazzanet is a great tool and it can even be greater when more of our members join the discussions and share good and welfare news. I thank Henrique Ozur-Bass for doing the many tasks of keeping this going. I look forward to working with Steve Stein, Abe Shapiro, Jay

Neufeld and Dvorah Buhr in our office to increase the number of newsletters and improve services to our members. We will seek ways of using new technology for our placement directors, Mort Shames and Bob Scherr, to be more accessible to members and congregations going through placement.

We need to continue to improve the marketing of our publications and to produce more new music and CDs which will be useful for our members, our choirs and our congregants. We have a great team of officers: Jacob Mendelson, Steve Stoehr, Jack Chomsky, Joseph Gole and David Propis; and our professional staff: Steven Stein, Abraham Shapiro, Morton Shames and Sol Mendelson. We can rely on each of these men to work with all of their skills for you and our Assembly. We need each committee chair and regional officer to make the deep commitment to give time and energy to your Cantors Assembly work.

The C.A. is not an office in NY, the C.A. is not a union, the C.A. is not Steve Stein or Abe Shapiro or even Sheldon Levin. We are a professional organization made up of over 500 members. Whether you serve a small congregation or large, you are a new member – an experienced colleague – or a retired *hazzan*, whether you are a man or woman, at a large shul or small, we need your work, your talent, your time and your commitment.

I believe we can make this profession one of which everyone, including my mother, can be proud. We can inspire kids in our schools and camps to say they want to grow up to be a cantor. We can make ourselves indispensable to our congregations and work together with our rabbinic partners for the good of our congregants, our organizations and *Eretz Yisrael*.

I ask that everyone now rise and look in your music binders in the back of the Installation program section for a setting of *Kaddish D'raban*. We should dedicate this to all of the Hazzanim who inspired us, to cantors yet to come and especially for us – each and every one of us in this room. *Yeyasher Kochachem* May we all go from strength to strength.

Report of the Executive Vice President: Bringing Jews Together; the Cantor as Peacemaker

Hazzan Stephen J. Stein:

About a year ago, the hot topic within the North American Jewish community was the ongoing friction between the different movements of our faith. One of the most talked about books was titled *Jew vs. Jew*. Fueling the acrimony was the continuing question of "who is a Jew," accompanied by the debate over religious pluralism in Israel. Then came another intifada, and wisely we closed ranks, at least temporarily, as the countries of the world took their predictable stand of branding Israel as the aggressor. The ill will between constituents of the various movements has been building, particularly during the past twenty-five years. I bring this to your attention for two reasons. First, as Jewish communal leaders it is important that we fully comprehend all aspects of this conflict. Second, as cantors I believe we are in a unique position of being able to help quell some of the antagonism.

To appreciate how we have come to this point, it is important to understand the problem on two levels: as human beings, and as Jews. It is an unfortunate human flaw that we tend to divide people into groups: "us," and "them." There is always an "us" and a "them." Jews and Gentiles; Blacks and Whites; Democrats and Republicans; Americans and Russians; Rabbis and Cantors; Washington Redskin fans and Dallas Cowboy fans. Even when competing sports teams are from the same city--as in last year's World Series--we had Yankees fans pitted against Mets fans, Roger Clemens fans vs. Mike Piazza fans. Similarly, we have Jew against Jew, and as we know, even within the different movements there is discord. There is always an "us" and a "them." If there isn't a subject on which we can disagree, don't worry; it won't take us long to come up with something.

In the first half of the 20th century, the struggle among Jews in North America was not so much between different branches of our faith, but rather between religious and secularist Jews. Particularly notable among the secularists were the Yiddishists whose allegiance to Judaism was based on ethnicity. Their sense of belonging to *K'lal Yisrael* had more to do with a common language and culture than belief. Religious dogma, in their eyes, was not the ultimate expression of Jewish identity. The great paradox was that the Yiddishists depended every bit as much on an enforced togetherness as did the Orthodox against whom they rebelled. The Yiddishist was statistically no more likely to marry a gentile than an Orthodox Jew. But since the mid-1970's with intermarriage rampant, bagels outselling doughnuts, and a TV sitcom named *Seinfeld* becoming a hit even in North Dakota, Jewishness as ethnicity or folk culture, as something separate and divisible from religious observance, is ceasing to exist in any meaningful way outside of Israel. Yiddish words such as *shlep* and *chutzpah* have crept into American culture. Ironically, who today under the age of 50 speaks Yiddish except for *charedim*, the kind of Jews for whom the Yiddishists had disdain?

Jewish Community Centers, established primarily as places for Jews to socialize are now focusing on Jewish education. Federations, which for years kept their distance from religious institutions are now contributing large sums to day schools.

In the second half of the 20th century, the conflict among Jews living in Israel has remained between the religious and the secularists. However, here in North America, the battle is waged between the different branches of our faith. Perhaps it is ironic that there is not strife between the Conservative and Reform movements. It would appear they have united, at least for the time being, to battle a perceived common foe.

Of particular note, during the last few decades, changes have taken place within each of the three major movements that have stretched the gaps between their respective constituencies. Let us examine one movement at a time.

Clearly, the Orthodox have moved further to the right. Modern or centrist Orthodoxy--which for many years was the backbone of the Orthodox movement--is no longer its dominant voice. In the 1950s and 1960s Modern Orthodox rabbis regularly participated in community-wide rabbinic boards with their Conservative and Reform colleagues. Today, Orthodox rabbis who take part in such groups are often subjected to condemnation and ridicule from their extremist colleagues.

I believe several factors have contributed to this move to the right. First, as modern Orthodox Jews encouraged their offspring--especially their sons--to become doctors and lawyers, they dissuaded their children from other kinds of Jewish profession, particularly teaching. Consequently, when modern Orthodox day schools needed teachers, they had no place to turn other than to the ultra-Orthodox. When those teachers entered the classroom, it was surely not surprising that they had a strong impact on the tone of what was being taught.

Second, the same environment that has fostered assimilation and intermarriage, a society more accepting of those who are different, has also enabled observant Jews to feel more comfortable in publicly demonstrating their religious practices. When I grew up in the 50s and 60s, most Orthodox Jews wore *kippot* in the synagogue, at afternoon religious-or-day school and at home. In public, most did not cover their heads. And if they did, it was probably with a baseball cap or some other type of hat. Orthodox Jews did not want to draw too much attention to themselves, especially in those years shortly after the Holocaust. In today's society, there is not the same paranoia. Observant Jews feel perfectly at ease displaying their Jewishness in public, and speaking out with confidence to express their convictions. Go to any major city and you will see people walking in the streets with *kippot*. You are even likely to be treated in a hospital by a doctor wearing a yarmulke. I am not suggesting that this is bad.

Third, while liberal Jews are intermarrying and/or having small families, Orthodox Jews are raising large families. Consequently, the number of Orthodox Jews--is growing, unlike the rest of the Jewish population.

Fourth, as the Orthodox perceive that Conservative and Reform Jews have moved further away from tradition, they have felt a need to circle the wagons and respond with even more stringent adherence to Jewish law.

Let us move to the Conservative movement. The typical Conservative congregation of the 50s and 60s--in contrast with today--was almost indistinguishable from a modern Orthodox synagogue. Three comparatively minor differences from that era come quickly to mind: mixed seating; sporadic English readings; and the late Friday

evening service. But even so, many modern Orthodox congregations had separate seating with no physical *mechitzah*, prayers for the government were read in English, and some even used microphones on Shabbat. With the passing of time, as Conservative Judaism evolved into a movement committed to ritual equality of the sexes and as Orthodoxy continued its march to the right, the differences between the two movements became much more pronounced. And, if the Orthodox still did not feel alienated from Conservative Jews, they surely sensed that a line had been crossed when the Reform movement adopted patrilineal descent. What made the patrilineal decision particularly significant was that its impact would be felt not only by Reform Jews, but by all Jews. From that time on, marriage between a Jew from an Orthodox or Conservative background and one from a Reform background, has in many instances become a very complex issue. If it has not happened yet, it is inevitable that the Reform movement is going to ordain some men and women as rabbis that others among us will not even recognize as being Jewish. One can certainly cite historical precedence for endorsing patrilineal descent, but its affect on the Jewish community as a whole is especially problematic. It is not my intent to pass judgment, but rather to call attention to the complexity of such issues.

The effort to conduct a census of American Jews in 2000 was embroiled in controversy among scholars over just who, in a population heavily affected by intermarriage, could be counted as a Jew. Rabbi Yitz Greenberg (a name familiar to all) asked in 1986, "Will there be one Jewish people by the year 2000?" He predicted, "Within decades, the Jewish people will split apart into two mutually divided hostile groups who are unable or unwilling to marry each other." And he continued, "In the past, anti-Semites built their plans on the expectation and hope that Jews will disappear. We have come to a tragic situation where good and committed Jews are predicting their survival strategies on the disappearance of other Jews."

In his book *World of our Fathers*, Irving Howe wrote the following: "America exacted a price [from us]. Not that it 'demanded' that immigrant Jews repudiate their past, their religion, or their culture; not that it 'insisted' they give up the marks of their spiritual distinctiveness....It set for Eastern European Jews a trap or lure of the most pleasant kind. It allowed the Jews a life far more 'normal' than anything their most visionary programs had foreseen and all it asked--it did not even ask, it merely rendered easy and persuasive--was that the Jews surrender their collective self."

America has genuinely accepted Jews, not simply tolerated us as court physicians or expedient bankers who could be jettisoned in times of crises, but literally loved us to such a degree that the intermarriage rate for American Jewry is now over 50%. Our non-Jewish neighbors are loving us to death. Was it only slavery, exile, oppression, persecution and genocide that kept us together for thousands of years?

A few moments ago I mentioned that the sparring between Jews seemed to take a short hiatus as we came together to support Israel in its latest crisis. But the calm didn't last long. An article in *Moment Magazine* over the winter, in which Rabbi Avi Shafran of the Agudath Israel blasted the Conservative movement, received lots of play in Anglo-Jewish newspapers. A few weeks ago there was a column in the *Forward*, about a recent dispute between the National Council of Young Israel and Arza of the Reform movement, involving a fundraising effort by Young Israel to provide Matzoh for Pesach to Jews in the Soviet Union. Arza's executive director instructed Reform rabbis not to contribute to the fund. Surely, there is more to the story than what I have

passed along. But the point remains. This animosity among Jews is a *chillul Hashem*. Similar stories appear in Anglo-Jewish newspapers all the time. You see them, and so do I.

So why do I bring all of this to your attention? Because, as cantors we are in a unique position to bring people together. Music can heal. The philosophical differences between rabbis of the different movements may now be too great to enable them to easily come together. Here at a Cantors Assembly convention, cantors serving Conservative, Reform and Orthodox congregations come together to sing and to study. We are the role models for Jews to emulate. We recognize that a beautiful setting of *Lecha Dodi* will inspire worshipers regardless of the kind of congregation they are attending. Our tradition teaches that the Second Temple was destroyed because of *sin'at chinam*. While there is no Temple today, our divisiveness very much threatens our future. My charge to each of you, this year, is to go home and help heal the tensions within your community. Often colleagues ask me what we can do-as cantors-to make others notice and better appreciate who we are? What better way in 2001 for cantors to make their mark as leaders than to bring Jews together? Organize concerts! If some won't come to a particular synagogue because of its affiliation, hold the program in a JCC. If *kol ishah* is an issue, put together a program of Jewish instrumental music.

A few of our colleagues have, in fact, begun such efforts. In Toronto, Ben Maissner, Yaacov Motzin and Efraim Sapir--serving Reform, Orthodox and Conservative congregations--led a joint mission to Israel. In the Connecticut communities of Fairfield and Bridgeport last month, cantors from six synagogues of the different movements joined together in an Israel Solidarity concert. Prominent in organizing that program were Shaul Prayer and Yeshaya Grama.

Earlier in my presentation I referred to the book *Jew vs. Jew*, subtitled: *the Struggle for the Soul of American Jewry*. The author is Samuel Freedman. I would like to acknowledge that excerpts from his work were used in my presentation, and I highly recommend the book to you. In the end, Mr. Freedman makes some predictions for the future. I'm not a prophet and I do not agree with all of his conclusions. But I suggest you read the text, and let me know what you think.

It is wonderful to see all of you, and if I have not yet had the opportunity to personally welcome you to our convention, I look forward to doing so over the next few days.

We record with special sorrow, the names of the following colleagues who have passed away this year:

Donald Fischer, William Z. Glueck,
Morris Pernick, Paula Victor, George Wagner

Memorial Roll of Departed Colleagues

Isadore Adelman	William Belskin-Ginsburg	Charles Lew	William Rubin
Martin Adolf	Leib Glantz	Joshua Lind	Arthur A. Sachs
Bernard Alt	Myro Glass	Murray Lind	Sol Sanders
Joseph Amdur	Gerhard Gluck	Sigmund Lipp	William Sauler
Irving Ashery	Joshua Gluckstein-Reiss	Morris Lowy	Marvin Savitt
Gedaliah Bargad	William Z. Glueck	Yehudah Leyb Mandel	Sidney Scharff
Jacob Barkin	Bernard Glusman	Asher Mandelblatt	Itzik Schiff
Saul Bash	Leon Gold	Aaron Mann	Morris Schorr
Ben W. Belfer	Maurice Goldberg	David Mann	Alvin F. Schraeter
Leon Bennett	Eugene Goldberger	Joseph Mann	Arnold Schraeter
Akibah Bernstein	Judah Goldring	Fred Mannes	Joseph A. Schroeder
Eliezer Bernstein	Jacob Goldstein	Philip Marantz	Jacob Schwartz
Sigmund Blass	Jacob Gowseiw	Gerson S. Margolis	Joseph Schwartzman
Saul H. Breeh	Todros Greenberg	Morris Markowitz	Robert Segal
Harold Brindell	Morris Greenfield	Abraham Marton	Samuel Seidelman
Harry Brockman	Charles Gudovitz	Leon H. Masovetsky	Moshe Semigran
David Brodsky	Isaiah Guterman	Bernard Matlin	Abraham Shapiro
William H. Caesar	Nathaniel Halevy	Saul Meisels	Jeffrey Shapiro
Barry Caplan	Herman Hammerman	Nathan Mendelson	Gregor Shelkan
Paul Carus	Michal Hammerman	Allen Michelson	Ruben Sherer
David Chasman	Henry Hearst	Edgar Mills	Max Shimansky
Jordan Cohen	Yehuda Heilbraun	Philip Moddel	David I. Silverman
Tevele Cohen	Mordecai Heiser	Samuel Morginstin	Moses J. Silverman
Josef Cycowski	Gabriel Hochberg	Abraham Naimark	Jacob Sivan
Joseph Cysner	William Hofstader	Moshe Nathanson	Hyman Sky
Simon Domowitz	Jacob Hohenemser	Paul Niederland	Jacob Sonenklar
Samuel Dubrow	Eugene Holzer	Ben G. Nosowsky	Nathaniel Sprinzen
Leopold Edelstein	William S. Horn	Morris Okun	Mendel Stawis
Aaron Edgar	Aaron Horowitz	Elija Olkon	Joshua O. Steele
Gershon Ephros	Israel Horowitz	Norman Perman	Charles Sudock
Ruben Erlbaum	Israel Idelsohn	Morris Pernick	Israel Tabatsky
Max Feder	David Jacob	Sherwood Plitnick	Isaac Trager
Nico Feldman	Victor Jacoby	Samuel Postolow	Julius Ulman
Irving Feller	Eli Kagan	Dov Propis	Carl Urstein
Nicholas Fenakel	Abraham Kantor	David J. Putterman	Paula Victor
Donald Fischer	Abraham Kaplan	Abraham Rabinowitz	Shmuel Vigoda
Mark Fishof	Adolph Katchko	Israel Reich	George Wagner
Felix Fogelman	Paul Kavon	Abraham Reisman	Henry Wahrman
Charles Freedland	Herman Kinnory	Yaacov Y. Renzer	Jacob Wahrman
Milton Freedman	Saul Kirschenbaum	Tevele Ring	Sol Wechsler
Harry Freilich	Irving Kischel	Moses Rontal	Harry Weinberg
Uri Frenkel	Louis Klein	Abraham S. Rose	Joseph Wiesselman
Henry Fried	Jacob Kleinberg	Louis Rosen	Abba Yosef Weisgal
Abraham Friedmann	Ben Klonsky	Yechiel Rosen	Solomon Winter
Israel Fuchs	Arthur S. Koret	Samuel Rosenbaum	Max Wohlberg
Moshe Ganchoff	Jacob Kurland	Ephraim Rosenberg	Arthur Yolkoff
Frederick Gartner	David Kusevitsky	Moshe Rosenfeld	Herbert Zaiman
Norman Geller	Joseph Lengyel	Charles Ross	Israel Zuckerberg
Marcus Gerlich	Morris Levinson	Louis Rothman	
	Abraham Levitt	Chaim P. Rothstein	

Hazzanim as Community Leaders

Hazzan Jack Chomsky, Columbus OH

I will focus my remarks on some of the strategies and techniques that make it possible to become a leader in one's community. Here are seven ideas to ponder, starting with

Listen—*Sh'ma Yisrael.*

1. Find out what it is that the people in your community want and need?
2. Seek criticism
3. Do what you're good at – and what you can manage
4. Understand that nothing is forever
5. Learn to apologize
6. Bring joy, energy and optimism to what you do.
7. Bring an expectation that you will be listened to, and that your ideas are important – but not self-important – and be patient.

Find out what it is that the people in your community want and need.

Too often, we arrive in a community – or at a committee meeting or community event—with a preconceived notion of what it is that we can bring that will transform this event into what we understand it ought to be. Remember that you are not the only one in your community who has ideas, and that your great ideas will do best if you can get other people to be invested in them. First, you need to prove to people that you can be a member of the team. Later, you can be selected as the all-star—or for the Hall of Fame!

Seek criticism

You may not be as fortunate as I am to live in a medium-sized midwestern city where people's pleasure comes from saying nice things to you. Whenever I do something in my community, people will either come over and tell me that it was wonderful, or they won't say anything. You need to seek out the people who *don't* think that you or your program are perfect. Find these critical people and listen to them. Don't argue with them. Make a mental note of what they say. Think about it later when the pain wears off.

Do what you're good at – and what you can manage

Each of us has unique talents, as well as one or two flaws. You need to have a good sense of what tasks you can perform easily, and which ones will be beyond your ability. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't try new things, just that you need to recognize which things will stretch you and require you to depend on benefiting from the expertise of others.

Understand that nothing is forever

You may create a fantastic program or work on a program that is very, very successful for a time. But with most things, a time comes when an activity may have peaked. Don't expend all your time and energy on something that only *you* care about

any more. If you can't involve other people in the program, it may be time to move onto something else. What do your chasidim think is important? What would *they* like to do? You don't have to do exactly what they might suggest, but you do need to listen to them (see #1), because you need to build areas of common interest.

Learn to apologize

This is one of the most surprising skills, and one which I learned from my rabbi in my first few years in Columbus. What do you do when someone comes to you with a complaint? You say, "I'm sorry." Even if they are wrong. Even if they have no business complaining to you. Even if it's not your fault. How many of you are looking, when you complain, to have someone tell you that you are wrong to complain?! It's natural to be defensive when someone complains to you, but the most helpful thing you can do is to get on their side. This doesn't mean that you have to be dishonest. Let's face it, you're going to have to placate them sooner or later. So why not sooner? "I'm sorry that you had a bad experience." "I'm sorry that happened." "I'm sorry it wasn't done the way you wanted." NOT "Well, if you had talked to me last week it would have been different." NOT "you just don't understand." NOT "it wasn't my fault." I have found this to be possibly the most empowering technique in my relationships with people. It empowers them and it empowers me. It saves time, and it's good for your heart and your blood pressure.

Bring joy, energy and optimism to what you do.

Nobody likes a sourpuss. You make the work much harder for everyone. If you find fault with an idea, first praise its positive aspects. Again, you want people to be on your side. So start out by being on *their* side. You can talk about what's *good* in what's being discussed, and then carefully illuminate the problematic issues, simultaneously expressing hope that they can be resolved. The answer to the question, "how are you?" is "Great." The answer is not "busy." Try this for a month – answer *anything* other than "busy." If you're not happy to be at a meeting, don't be at the meeting. Or better, be at the meeting, but don't show that you're unhappy to be at the meeting. Or best of all, decide that you *are* happy to be at the meeting! Like all *mitzvot*, this gets easier with regular practice.

Bring an expectation that you will be listened to, and that your ideas are important –but not self-important–and be patient.

This doesn't mean be arrogant. It means that you should carry yourself in a way that shows that you expect to be a full partner in what is taking place. At first, this may not be the reality. But in time, it will be. One interesting aspect is how to conduct yourself at a meeting. The most persuasive person in a group usually speaks last, and *least*. For me, this has always been the hardest thing to do, and it may be generally difficult for *hazzanim*, as we are all eager to "perform." But if you speak too soon, the decisions will be made well after you voice your opinion, and you will have little effect on the outcome. If you do manage to wait, you can summarize–*briefly*–what has gone before and then re-direct the conversation in the direction you desire. Watch people who are good at this, and then learn to be like them!

As far as being patient is concerned, know that there will be times when people are *not* interested in your great insight, talent or skill. But they might *eventually* be

interested, if you don't screw it up with a sour face or a negative reaction when you find that your time has not yet come. It might take years for your time to come. But there are many things to do in your congregation or community. Building a reservoir of disappointment or bitterness will only make it more difficult to succeed.

So much for seven things you need to do. I have two bonus principles to add to them.

Deliver the goods.

When you agree to do something, do it. Build a reputation as a person who gets the job done. And make sure that the job that you do has something to do with what you were asked to do! Then, when you want someone to let you do something, or you want someone to do something for you, you've got a better chance.

Stand for something.

Don't misunderstand what I said before about being ready to apologize. It doesn't mean that you have to be a sycophant who oozes artificial enthusiasm for everything for everything that everyone else says or does. You must have moral authority. You must be prepared to say, "We cannot do that." "We need to do this in or a more just fashion." Although I have grown adept at making apologies, I believe I have a very strong record of willingness to take a stand for what is right – even when it is not popular. This may be the most important way of firming up your authority. After all, what is power for?

One final note...I have been blessed this year to be the co-president of a congregation-based community action (i.e. social justice) organization in my community, a federation of over 40 churches and synagogues. We have been successful in getting the city of Columbus to commit millions of dollars toward gap funding for affordable housing that will in turn produce tens of millions of dollars worth of affordable housing. The motto of the group, as we prepare to bring Franklin County on board with this project for millions of more dollars, is "A leader is not one who does the work of eight people. A leader is one who gets eight people to do the work." The strategies enumerated above will help get you to that point.

I hope that they help you. **And I hope that someday I will be able to follow them, too!**

Conducting Workshop
Dr. Joshua Jacobson,
Founder of the Zamir Chorale, Boston, MA

Good Morning! When Sheldon Levin asked me to do this session, I think the original idea was for me to show you how to wave your hands. Many people think that's what a conductor does, he or she waves the hands. But I'm sure you all know that is the least part of what goes into conducting. I've made a list of the things that I usually teach in conducting classes. The first item is **setting goals for your conducting program**. All too often we don't even take the time for that essential step: to verbalize what we are doing, why we are doing it. Once we figure out what and why we're trying to do we can decide on step number two, **the best way to go about achieving those goals**.

Another item is **rehearsal techniques**, because when you stand up in front of the choir—not at a concert but in a rehearsal—you are a teacher. And you've got to find the most efficient way of getting what you want out of the group. There are a number of shortcuts that many of us have learned regarding rehearsal techniques, tricks we've picked up from conductors along the way as well as from our own experiences. Flowing from that is the general area of **repertoire**: what exactly are you going to perform, where do you find this music? And then there is **philosophy of repertoire**: what kind of music would best suit your aims and the interests of your group? Say you decide on Jewish music. Well, what makes music Jewish? That of course will depend on whether you have a choir that sings the liturgy at services or whether your choir is primarily doing concerts. Many of you probably lead choirs that do both, at different times, and that will determine your choice of repertoire.

Going along with the last two items is **programming**, how do you create a program? In terms of concert programming—leaving aside the service for a moment—I happen to enjoy putting together a program. For me it's like the act of composing. A composer takes the notes and puts them together to make a composition. I take the compositions and put them together to make a program. The same principles are involved in either case.

Then we come to what I alluded to at the beginning, **the gesture**: how do you move your hands? But it's not just the hands; as you know, it's the whole body. What does your body convey? Sometimes I'm of two minds, even simultaneously. A part of me says, the less I do as a conductor, the better. Often in rehearsal—and even in concert—I stop conducting. You know how often we scream at the choir, "Watch the conductor, watch the conductor!" How much of that is ego trip and how much is necessary? Sometimes I stop conducting because of what then happens, it forces your ensemble to be more self-reliant. They become like a chamber group. And yet—on the opposite side of the coin—sometimes when I'm conducting I find that if I just change my gesture a little bit I'll get the reaction I want. And then I realize how important every detail of gesture really is. So you have to analyze what you're doing with your body; everything that you do is going to have an effect.

I was once watching a telecast of Leonard Bernstein conducting Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. It was near the end, the part where the chorus is just chugging along at the top of its lungs. And Bernstein at that point almost stopped conducting; his hands go down and he's just nodding his head. He doesn't have to conduct, everything is churning along, even the orchestra players are not going to get lost in that piece. And then, at the *Sforzando*—that heavy accent on the word *Freude* ("Joy!")—all he had to give was the tiniest indication and it happened. Quite often when we're trying to get the chorus' attention we start conducting **bigger** and **bigger** and **BIGGER**. What we really should do is just the opposite: conduct **SMALLER** and smaller and smaller.

Another aspect of leading a choir is **score preparation**, which we'll touch upon a bit later. Among other elements is that of **auditions**: what goes into an audition? What are you looking for, how do you go about finding it? One of the most difficult things that I face with my choir is solo auditions; I hate them.

Then come **warm-ups**: what do you want to get out of them? So often I will go and watch a high school choir warming up with their conductor and they're just going through mindless repetitions of *do-re-mi-fa-sol-fa-mi-re-do*—a half-step up each time through two octaves—and then reversing the procedure back down again. And the conductor isn't even listening to what the group is doing. And why is he doing it? Because he thinks he should be doing it. Ask yourself: what are the goals of warming up, and how do you go about accomplishing them?

Another question is, how do you arrange your choir: sitting in rehearsal; standing in concert? The issue also arises of whether or not to arrange them in sections or in mixed lineup. But there many other subtleties that enter into the equation. For example, how does the function of a synagogue choir affect the arrangement? I was recently asked to write an article for the *U.A.H.C. Annual* on "The Synagogue Choir," and it mushroomed into something really big: the history as well as function of the synagogue choir. And that too has to be considered when arranging your group.

Last on my list—but not the end by any means—how can the discoveries of **musicology** influence what you need to do as a conductor? The *Bar'chu* by Salomone Rossi comes to mind immediately. How do you choose one edition over another? The choir at last night's concert sang a Kurt Weill *Kiddush*, using an American/European edition that's very popular. And yet, if you go back and look at the first publication, by Schirmer, you'll find that the piece is in Ashkenazic Hebrew. The current edition is in Sephardic Hebrew; who changed it? I don't think it was the composer, because he died in 1950. So it's a question: should your choir sing it in Sephardic or Ashkenazic?

Now, if you're performing in a service, your rabbi will advise you on the local practice of that synagogue. But what if that synagogue performance is part of a concert? Or suppose you're

doing Ernest Bloch's *Avodat Hakodesh*, should you change the Hebrew to Sephardic? Many people do. If you're doing the Mozart *Mass*, should you use Southern—or Northern—pronunciation of Latin? It's a similar question. My point of view is, for authentic **performance practice** do it the way the composer heard it, or get as close to that as you can within the limitations of certain practical constraints. Getting back to the Weill *Kiddush*, there's also an F-sharp in the American/European edition that's an F-natural in the original. So I've given you a Menu, as we say in computer talk...

Question from the floor:

Are warm-ups for children different than for adults?

Dr. Jacobson:

I would go by principles that are universal for all voices, and leave it to you to adapt them to what you have to deal with.

Another Question from the floor:

I happen to have eighteen women and three men; what should I do?

Dr. Jacobson:

Write new arrangements; and let me make a quick statement that's relevant. Treat every group as if it were professional choir; you will be amazed at what they give back to you. It makes no difference how amateur they are, treat them like professionals.

Question from the floor:

How is it that some conductors can remain calm no matter how exciting the music? I get so wrapped up in it that I am exhausted after every piece!

Dr. Jacobson:

You may have to go back to some of the basics in technique. But consider this: if you are tense, how do you think your singers are going to sing? I've seen conductors who appear to be going through a bout of hysteria! What do you think that does to the singers' throats? And what about all the others who shout, "**SING SOFTER! SING SOFTER! WHY AREN'T YOU SINGING SOFTER?**" We have to be very mindful of those traps.

Question from the floor:

Many of us have to conduct choirs ourselves during services, and the singers are standing behind us on the Bimah. We can't wave our hands while facing the congregation, so should we use our head, our shoulders or body language? It's difficult with our back to them.

Dr. Jacobson:

You know, one of the things hinted at earlier was: encourage your choir to sing without a conductor. Sometimes, especially in a popular piece that everyone knows, I'll stand off to the side and sing with them. But just as a quick-fix answer to you I'd say, train them to sing by themselves. And if you have one or two members of the group who can do the minimal amount

of leading that's necessary, **empower them**. Give them the responsibility and eventually they'll shape up. Make it an exercise at rehearsals, and explain to your group why you're doing that exercise. Of course I'm assuming that you know why, but you'll find yourself getting a lot better results if they understand the purpose of each exercise.

One of the things we all have to do is figure out what our problems are. Every group varies in individual abilities. One person is conversant with Hebrew but has a terrible ear, another may sing well but has a hard time with words. After every rehearsal, after every concert, it's a good idea to find a quiet place, sit down and make a list of what went right and what went wrong. Build on what went right. But also spend time on figuring out **how to correct what went wrong**. Go for a long walk where you'll be less distracted by the things around your house, and let your mind on how you might change certain results. **Set a new set of goals** and then try to find ways of reaching them. One way might be to **use program material as part of your warm-up**. Or perhaps **organize a Chug—a circle apart from the rehearsal**—for those interested in learning how to read music.

You might decide to **set up a voice class** for developing stamina and range in singing. There are solutions, you just have to find them. Otherwise, we can just feel sorry for ourselves week after week. Don't we do that a lot? "Oh, you won't believe it, I have the worst choir in the world, it's terrible, I don't know what I'm going to do with them!" And you're miserable, you're at your wits' end.

Question from the floor:

Speaking of that, how would you handle members who never attend rehearsals but who show up for every performance?

Dr. Jacobson:

This is not easy, but what we have to do is work with a committee made up of our choir members. We're struggling with this issue right now in Zamir, which is--among other functions --a social organization. It's also a professional performing group; people pay money to hear it. So on the warm and fuzzy side people says, "How can you kick X out of the choir? You don't know what it means to him, it's his whole life! He's going through a divorce while taking care of his children, and he just lost his job. You can't take the choir away from him." And then someone else adds, "If you kick him out I think he's going to go Postal. He's going to come back next week with a shotgun..." One of my section leaders was really afraid of this.

On the other hand my job is to say, "It's one thing to worry about X. But we should also worry about the other forty-nine of us in the choir, for whom he's spoiling the experience. I get complaints from people who stand next to him. And what about the thousands of people who are out there in the audience?" Sometimes being kind to one person means being unkind to dozens, hundreds or thousands other people. It's difficult, it's a "Sophie's Choice," but sometimes you have to figure out where you and the group stand to lose more. If the primary goal of your group is a social one, there's no question; you just suffer the delinquents and let everyone cover up as best they can. But if the musical considerations are going to override the social aspect, then that's something else.

I haven't even touched upon the **technical problems** you might face when trying to read a Baroque score by Salamone Rossi—the *Barechu* that you sang at yesterday's choral session in its original 1623 form—with **no bar lines**. That makes it harder for the conductor, but not for the singers. The problem with an edition that has no bar lines is that you have to **superimpose a pattern**, to decide whether you'll beat 2-3-4-7, whatever it is, and those will be the spots where downbeats—with their accents—are going to come, because of the way we perform this music. But that was not the intention in the original flowing setting. You'd be taking away something by imposing bar lines; there are no bars in early music.

Then there's the issue of **lyrics written in Hebrew characters**, but from left to right, which is hard because it makes the brain work in two ways at one time. Rossi's solution was to put the first letter of the word under the last note to which it was sung. This means that if you have a three-syllable word like *Barechu* (sung that way even though the grammarians tell us it has only two syllables; there's no *sheva na* between *bar* and *chu*) and there are more than three notes, you have to decide and work out in rehearsal which notes go with which syllables. And it's a wide choice; I've seen different editions of Rossi's work—including my own—each with a different allocation of syllables.

There is also **only one voice line to a page**. Orchestral musicians are used to this. But choral singers have a great advantage; they generally read from scores and not from part-books. And I think that's why a chorus is a much warmer institution to make music in than a band or an orchestra. It's because you're aware of your community. Instrumentalists have tunnel vision; all they can see is their own part, and that makes them more egotistical. Choral singers are more aware of ensemble. But back in Rossi's day both the singers and instrumentalists used part-books. I think it takes a lot more rehearsal; even though the composers had scores, the conductors did not. They just beat time. Another difference is **the various clefs that different lines appeared in**, which we're no longer used to. The notes themselves look remarkably like our modern notes, with perhaps a slight difference in their shapes. Also, we know that in Rossi's day **the basic beat was a half-note**, not the quarter-note as it is today.

What we said before about the absence of bar lines is not quite true. There are **double bar lines**: one at the end and a few in the middle, which indicate that something is missing, just like in Church music of the period. It means the congregation is going to do something at that point. If we assume the choir is acting *in loco cantoris*—as *sheli'ach tsibbur*—then **what's left out is the congregation's response**. In Rossi's setting of the *Kaddish*, the response *Yeheh Shmeh Rabba Mevarach*... is indicated by double bars. In his setting of the *Keter* (Sephardic version of the *Kedushah*), double bar lines replace all the responses.

Notice that **there are no dynamic markings**. Still you can sing expressively within this music, just so long as you understand that the markings you put in for your singers are your own and not the composer's. The bottom line is, you have to make the music come alive! Again, notice that **there are no tempo markings**. But quite often the composers were present at rehearsals, teaching the music. And they considered this *gebrauchmusik*, for a specific purpose

and for that moment; they weren't thinking of posterity. On the other hand, if you read treatises by Rossi's contemporaries like Michael Praetorius, you see a certain understanding that a half-note implied a certain tempo. If you wanted music to go faster, you would use a different kind of notation.

To the best of our knowledge there were no women singing this music in the synagogue services of Mantua, Venice and Ferrara; that would have been too much of a radical change. Yet in Israeli musicologist Dan Harran's biography of Rossi, a rabbi is quoted as saying that his wife was a wonderful singer and that "she even sang the *Kedushah* in the choir." We know Rossi's music was sung in the synagogues during worship. We also know it was sung **outside the synagogues**, and that's where **women may have had a hand in performing** it. Otherwise it was sung only by men: *basso*, *tenore*, *alto* (which means "high" in Italian; probably sung by a high tenor voice) and *canto* ("song," meaning "melody;" sung by men using a cultivated, thin falsetto in the soprano range). We're not sure whether or not boys took the *alto* and *canto* parts.

One generation after his death, Rossi's music was forgotten, and that's the way it remained for 200 years. We have a combination of circumstances to thank for bringing it back. In the early-19th century the French banker Edmond de Rothschild was given a choir book of Rossi's music while traveling in Italy. He brought it to Samuel Naumbourg, who was cantor at the synagogue in Paris that Rothschild attended. Naumbourg didn't know what to make of it, and showed the book to his choir leader Samuel David, who asked a brilliant eighteen-year-old student at the Paris Conservatory to look it over. That student, Vincent D'Indy, helped both synagogue musicians decipher the contents. In the edition of Rossi's music that Naumbourg produced, tempos and dynamics appear, along with indicators for soloists and choir. Syllables are provided for each note, plus bar lines which give us stresses where they don't belong; all in all it sounds like Romantic music.

In the 20th century, Isadore Freed's arrangements of Rossi were published by Transcontinental, and made him appropriate for the American synagogue. Freed changed a lot: openings sung by a soloist with an organ playing the choir parts; when choir enters it's given crescendo effects. Then came Fritz Rikko's edition—distributed by Presser—for three voices, too expensive for general use but made accessible by the Cantors Assembly's performance edition. I've just put out my own edition—under the Hazamir imprimatur—in parts, with regular notes and bar lines at important moments only. Unfortunately, the bar lines have to go through all parts at the same time, which can destroy the varied polyphonic motion of different voice lines. When rehearsing Rossi—in any edition—a good rehearsal technique would be to **have any one of the sections stand, turn around and face the others**. What happens then is that everyone starts not only to look at each other but to **listen to the other parts as well**.

Incidentally, we often make the assumption that people who speak Ashkenazic Hebrew put the accent on the wrong syllable and that people who speak Sephardic Hebrew put the accent on the right syllable. And therefore we assume that any person who speaks Ashkenazic Hebrew is exempted from being corrected about whether he or she puts the accent on the right syllable. Wrong! If you read treatises by Ashkenazic rabbis, they're always talking about putting the

accent on the correct syllable. And there are many people today—as there have been many through the centuries in the Ashkenazic world—who are very careful about *mil'el* and *mil'ra*. And at Sephardic services today there are plenty of accents on wrong syllables. Example: *Yom zeh leylisrael... orah veSIMchah, orah veSIMchah, orah veSIMchah*. Not only is wrong syllable accented, it also receives a *sheva NA* where none belongs! Then there's the so-called "Yemenite" *Ozi vezim'rat Yah, vay'hi li liSHUah*, again a misplaced *sheva NA* and misplaced accent! I don't think either branch has a monopoly on correct accentuation or syllabification.

Question from the floor:

How do we get a group to sing without its conductor?

Dr. Jacobson:

Firstly, **some music—like Rossi—works better without a conductor**; and you have to know which. Secondly, at rehearsal **try to pick a lead singer**, someone who knows the parts. **Have that person cue, not with the hand but with the head**, like in a string quartet. And be sure to **have the singers face each other**, at least in a semi-circle. Remember that this music was originally sung with one singer on a part.

I was once at a workshop with Robert Shaw and there were 200 of us singing Bach's *Mass in B Minor*. During the Q & A period someone asked Shaw about historical authenticity and he said, "You're absolutely Right! But should I deny the other 196 people in this room the opportunity of singing this great work?" You have to balance both aims.

Issues for Women Cantors

Hazzan Janet Roth Krupnik, Summit, NJ

It's highly gratifying for me to chair this symposium on issues that are important to us as women cantors; we hope and pray it will be duplicated every year at CA conventions. From the responses that many of you sent to my questionnaire, I've compiled a wish list of topics for discussion, now and in the future. Please bear with me if I exercise my prerogative as chair and paraphrase some of your words rather than quote them directly. Also, because the majority of your suggestions showed up in multiple responses I will not attribute any of them to specific individuals.

First and foremost on all of our minds—although you state it in different ways—is the question of how women might gain respect as cantors. Someone cited *Hin'ni He'ani Mima'as*, the cantor's self-referent prayer that opens the Musaf service on *Yamim Nora'im*.

Here I stand, deficient in deeds and awed by You,

Yet I dare to plead on behalf of Your people.

The text petitions that the *hazzan's* prayers be worthy, as if he were an "experienced elder, whose lifetime has been well spent and *whose beard is fully grown*." As women cantors, we have to ask ourselves: what in the female lexicon of metaphors could we possibly substitute that would command the same reverence as that patriarchal male image? A few of you have jokingly replaced the phrase *uz'kano m'gudal* with its feminist flip side, *shadyyim nachonu*, after Ezekiel chapter sixteen's description of a Jerusalem that had "grown exceedingly beautiful, *with firm breasts and luxuriant hair*."

But seriously, the fact remains that external considerations like physical appearance and dress (always a factor when women appear in public roles) have currently assumed primacy of place, at the expense of values which formerly defined the cantorate. Judaic knowledge and vocal prowess are no longer viewed as decisive qualities for female—or even male—cantors. The bottom line: like it or not, we're in the same boat as our superstar male counterparts in trying to reclaim the dignity and respect due our scared calling.

Secondly—and it's only natural, considering that almost all of us are still within our childbearing years—we share the desire to see a standard provision added to cantorial and rabbinic contracts, that would grant us maternity leave. To start that ball rolling we would need an official statement from both the CA and RA, addressing *paternity*—as well as maternity—leave. Many of you would also like to see provision made for flextime, and consideration of the physical problems entailed by singing or fasting during pregnancy (not to mention falling on one's face during the High Holiday *Aleinu* and *Avodah*).

For any of these changes to take place we would have to invite our male colleagues—especially our elected officers—to attend our sessions, to sit on our panels and to participate fully in our discussions. How else are we ever going to raise their consciousness?

Having said that, I must add that there was also a consensus among you on the need for women cantors to *network on their own*. This could be done through an e-mail list accessible only to those of us who subscribe to it, in addition to our own convention sessions. It would enable us to reach out to one another, to create what many of you

have called a *Community of Kindness* within the larger organization, one that would lead the way in *valuing all its members* as colleagues.

Here are some suggested projects that such a caring community might undertake: commissioning or adapting traditional recitatives for our voices; mentoring younger colleagues, particularly first timers; inviting each other to appear as featured soloists at regional concerts; and organizing a children's choir to sing *synagogue repertoire* at conventions (an experience that many of us missed out on when we were growing up).

The last item leads me to a number of other ideas you have spelled out for future convention planners to implement.

Give more than one choice when scheduling educational sessions, even if it means reducing the number of concerts.

(It would be more helpful for people to attend the Chaplaincy as well as conducting workshops if they were not concurrently run).

Invite more women presenters.

Schedule a women's table lunch discussion.

Schedule women's coaching sessions.

Gear some of the programming to new cantors.

Make the programming more interactive, less frontal.

Schedule more continuing education sessions.

Offer workshops in professional skills such as administration, public relations and marketing.

Offer sessions on improving cantor/rabbi communication.

Finally, almost all of you expressed a desire for more recognition within the CA itself, possibly by means of a concert, recording or publication. At the 10th anniversary of women being accepted into the CA, wasn't there even *one* woman deserving of an award? As chair, I feel obligated to play devil's advocate by countering these legitimate questions with several of my own. First, have we ever stopped to ask ourselves *what we can do for the CA*? Up until now the CA has not been able to persuade capable women cantors to assume positions of responsibility within the organization. While some of us have served on the Executive Council, as a group *we have refused to chair any committee*, agreeing only to *co-chair* Planning for a few recent conventions and steadfastly avoiding the *nitty-gritty* of Management.

Our women members need to know that before there can be women officers, there must be women who are willing and able to assume the same *responsibilities* that their male colleagues have assumed on their way to higher office. Women with small children (many of us) are the least likely to volunteer away any more of their precious time with their families than is absolutely necessary for their work. But they could still *share ideas* via the Internet—as mentioned earlier—and they could still *recruit other women* who do have the time and the energy demanded by chairing a committee.

I'll close on that upbeat note. Thanks for your attention, and above all for your thoughtful input. *Leshanah haba'ah be-Washington, DC!*

Cantors and Educators Working Together

Chair: *Hazzan* Jack Chomsky, Columbus, OH;

Dr. Robert Abramson, Education Director for United Synagogue;

Dr. Sheldon Dorph, Director of the Ramah Camps;

Dr. Elliot Spack, Director, Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education;

Hazzan Carol Chesler, Huntington, NY; *Hazzan* Jeffrey Myers, Massapequa, NY

Hazzan Jack Chomsky:

The full title of this discussion is "Cantors and Educators Working Together to Teach Future Generations," and we have a very distinguished panel. At the far left is Elliot Spack, the Executive Director of CAJE, Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education, which is the umbrella organization of 4,200 Jewish educators across the country. To his right we have Dr. Robert Abramson, Director of the United Synagogue Education Department which includes the Solomon Schechter Day Schools. To his right, Dr. Sheldon Dorph, Director of the Ramah Camps. For our two *Hazzan* panelists we have Jeffrey Myers of Massapequa, New York, and Carol Chesler of Huntington, New York. I have asked the panelists to address three issues.

- 1) Give an example or two in which you have seen the profound effect that a *hazzan* can have in an educational context. This can be from a particular event or long term program.
- 2) In what ways is your agency currently involved with professional *Hazzanim* and how is this different from the situation five years ago?
- 3) What would you like the partnership with *hazzanim* to look like five years from now? Will this relationship grow, what resources need to be found to realize your dreams or goals?

Dr. Elliot Spack:

Good afternoon. I think I would be most remiss if I did not let you know that I am here also for celebratory reasons in addition to the invitation which Jack Chomsky was so kind to offer. I have the *z'chut* to be one of Sheldon Levin's congregants and I am here to celebrate his installation with all of you. I'm more than one of his congregants -- I'm his *gabbai*. I confess to being part of the selection panel that invited Sheldon to come to our community, and my wife and I were privileged to have him live in our house for a while. So this is just a wonderful moment for us to celebrate with you. Bob Abramson and I also have something in common: we were products of the same congregation -- Kehillath Israel in Brookline, MA -- and together we celebrated our Bar Mitzvah when Michal Hammerman was on the Bimah.

The whole issue that we're talking about of cantors and educators working together is a bifurcation, which I choose not to live with. For me cantors are as much educators as anybody. There is no distinction in the world in which I live along the lines of job stratification. This is the CAJE world. We are all Jewish educators, and we are all committed to the transmission of the Jewish heritage. And if there were any

doubt about this, you should have witnessed the cordial reception extended when I arrived during lunchtime yesterday. I was greeted by dozens of CAJE members who are here at this conference. This is not a new phenomenon. We are all agents of *chinuch*. We are all working in the vineyards trenches of Jewish life, to maintain the traditions and to continue the process of Jewish continuity.

I want to address some of the issues that Jack raised. He asked us to cite some situations where I felt a *hazzan* can have a profound effect in an educational context. For twenty-five years Mordechai Goldstein worked in the community in which I lived and I watched him as he introduced to our community a Torah reading program *par excellence*, some of which many of you have in your own communities. Twenty-five years ago it was a novelty; all of the Torah reading in the congregation was done by volunteers, young people and adults, many of whom had never read Torah before. And in fact each week a different core of readers, as many as eight, were invited to come to *bimah* and to read from the *sefer torah*. Some had read for their own Bar Mitzvah service and if they could be coerced a couple of times thereafter. Nevertheless, we acknowledged these people, we gave them the opportunity to be recognized by the congregation; we gave them certificates, we gave them *matanot*, we gave them a luncheon and in a prominent place in our synagogue we placed a beautiful plaque honoring them when they reached a certain number of plateaus. If they read fifty *aliyot* we noted it, after a hundred *aliyot* we noted it again, and on each occasion their name was added to the appropriate plaque.

This to me was a wonderful contribution that the *hazzan* made to the community. And when guests would come to our synagogue they were very impressed to see that we had this core of regular readers. One year, Mordechai had as many as a hundred and sixty-five members of the congregation, young and old people alike, who were a part of the core of readers. I tried to ask Mordy today how many different names there were in his database over the course of the twenty-five years. He didn't remember. My guess is, probably six-hundred people were involved during his twenty-five years, all learning to read Torah and actually participating in our reading. Many of them, particularly young people, took that skill with them to university campuses or to their new choices of residence as part of the mobility that we're experiencing in North American Jewish life. And they became key Torah readers in their new synagogues, my own children among them. I have the *zechut* of knowing that on one particular Purim all of my kids and my wife were at different locations and every one of them was reading *megillah*, in a different community somewhere in the world. And that's a tribute to Mordy and the program that he introduced as an educational experience in our congregation. Sheldon has inherited that and will be continuing it as we maintain that commitment to Jewish life in New Jersey.

My friend Joel Caplan may be in the audience. Joel serves in Caldwell, New Jersey. I know that, because my children are his congregants. I know Joel has taught his community a number of innovative things, particularly through various *mak'heilot*, as he enables people to participate in Jewish music from the *ketanim* to the ancient fossils like us--people of all ages who want to participate in Jewish music--he has found a niche for them. And it's not just people who are opera stars, but people who just want to sing. For me that's an educational experience: introducing them -- through Jewish music -- to parts of Jewish life. There was a *hazzan* somewhere -- and I don't know where because it was reported to me -- so we'll call him Cantor *Ploni*. Cantor *Ploni*

was the *hazzan* in a community and also a teacher in the Religious School. The *hazzan* was considered an integral member of the faculty, not just a music specialist. As such he was invited regularly to help, not so much in performances of cantatas or in special events, but within the regular curriculum, to teach Jewish themes through Jewish music. So while many just think of the *hazzan's* role in relation to *Shabbat* or *Chagim*, this *hazzan* went far beyond that. He introduced themes that we would call ethical and moral principles — the practice of *ve'ahavta lerei'acha kamocha* and the giving of *tzedakah la'aniyim* -- through Jewish music that didn't necessarily follow the liturgical calendar. In that way, the Jewish music that he brought was seen as an integral part of the curriculum and not seen as episodic. I thought that was particularly impressive.

But I think that of the various *hazzanim* that I've seen, their most powerful contribution has been in the way they served as role models. I am privileged to have seen wonderful *hazzanim* over the years who have been models of *menschlechkait*. We need people who can be role models to our youngsters and our adult community of what it is to be able to live in this modern life as a functional Jew. In many cases, the *hazzan* of the community serves as that role model. As I mentioned before, we in CAJE regard the *hazzanim* as integral members of our community. We make no distinction of whether or not you are a principal, a teacher, a *hazzan*, or even a layperson. And so we welcome you to our CAJE community. We did so twenty-six years ago when we were first created and we hope that will continue. We don't just see our cantor-members as performers at concerts. They are workshop presenters and in many cases active participants in the planning of our programs. Nate Lamm talked about the new emerging role of the cantor, that it was not something restricted to music. We're talking about family education, *hazzanim* assisting families in observing life cycle events. We're talking about life-long adult learning and the role that a *hazzan* can play in that process. We hope that it will be reinforced and continued, and we pray that it go from strength to strength. Thank you.

Dr. Robert Abramson:

I'm delighted to be here. I spent thirteen wonderful years as the head of the Schechter Day School – Hillel -- in greater Detroit. Most of what I have to say in terms of examples comes from those years during which I had the privilege of working with *Hazzan* Larry Vieder. I also worked with Cantor Chaim Najman.

I will begin with the following. What does the basketball coach, the ballet teacher and *Hazzan* Louie Klein have in common? Now, if you knew *Hazzan* Klein from Detroit, you would realize that this is a very strange mixture. Since you aren't smiling, I guess most of you did not know him. The answer to that question taught me a very important educational lesson, one that I want to share with you. From the three of them, I learned that there are different contexts for teaching, and those three share a context for teaching that is pretty much unique to the *Hazzan* within the Jewish world. It determines how they can teach, what they can expect, and what the child's and parent's expectations and tolerance are.

It is different than the classroom. Let me tell you my first puzzlement with it. I would go to my daughter's ballet classes and watch the ballet master nod to a student to raise the elbow, raise the leg – yes, no, bad, good -- these are the words she spoke, judgmental as all get-out. And the kids stood in line to go to these ballet classes and the

parents sat there quietly. I looked across the room one day and said, "that mother would be in my office tomorrow if a Religious School teacher treated a kid that way." Sports coaches are notorious for being both tough on kids and close to them. Now, I don't want to imply that what *Hazzan* Klein, who was a gentle person, had in common with these people was toughness and a lack of communication. What he had in common with the other two was the following: all three are guardians of skills, the mastery of which are valued. And therefore the tolerance -- the willingness, even the anxiousness to be judged -- provided it doesn't go beyond all bounds. What am I alluding to? In the case of *hazzanim*, many are still responsible for the Bar and Bat Mitzvah training of kids. I know that to be true because *Hazzan* Klein trained several generations of kids at Hillel Day School for their Bar and Bat Mitzvah observances, and in the course of it he taught them *trop* for both Torah and Haftarah reading. Whenever he came to me in frustration with some kid I would smile and say, "kid's going to get Bar Mitzvah, right?" He knew those kids, and he knew how to encourage them when needed.

Let me tell you a brief version of a long story. The first student to read Torah in our school was a girl named Laura, who had more than a bit of learning difficulty. She well motivated, but dyslexic. Her English reading wasn't very good, and neither was her Hebrew reading. Her parents decided they wanted her to learn to read Torah and even though she couldn't do it in her own synagogue, which celebrated Bat Mitzvah on Friday night, she was also going to celebrate on a Thursday morning at school. I sat *Hazzan* Klein down because we were not only going to host her celebration, but a those of a whole bunch of kids coming up. He said he could do it, "I can teach girls as well as boys." Still, he was not overly comfortable doing it. Where he came from in Europe, this was not customarily done. He worked with Laura and she did a wonderful job. The amazing thing is that I looked around the auditorium and he was standing in the back *kvelling* and she realized it, because afterwards he came up to her and they hugged.

Hazzan Klein had the ability to *kvell* and take joy in her *simchah*, even though it was some stretch for him to do so with the first girl he had ever taught, and that represents to me this unique relationship that is possible between the *hazzan* and the young teenager. You have those kids at a golden moment and if you haven't read statistics, you ought to familiarize yourselves with reports on the Bar and Bat Mitzvah years from the Ratner Studies which were done by the Seminary. There are now two reports, because kids from the first study -- five years ago -- have since been tracked and evaluated on the basis of their continuation in Jewish Studies. The studies proved that **as *hazzanim* many of you are in that important moment of contact with tremendous potential to influence our youngsters.** Now as most *hazzanim* know, it is a long-term program. And that is why for a period of ten-to-fifteen years at the Seminary, there was what became known as the "Motown" sound. Many graduates of Hillel went on to the Seminary's Joint Program with Columbia University. And on Shabbat they read Torah, boys and girls alike. Larry Vieder was another *hazzan* who had taught those Hillel graduates *trop*. *Hazzan* Vieder's *trop* was a little bit unusual, but beautiful. It could be spotted, just as Louie Klein's students' *trop* was spotted. It became a joke at Seminary Shabbat services: "Oh, there's the Motown sound." And those Hillel products were very well respected Torah readers, they set a standard for quality at the Seminary.

You *hazzanim* have the abilities to work with kids and to get them involved Jewishly in things they want to be involved in at that moment, and that includes *trop*, it includes *tefillah* and it includes Jewish Music. Get to know the kids individually, of course, but I challenge you to go a step further: get to understand that age group. Read about it. Read some of the materials about what Middle School kids are like. Visit a local Middle School. Call up, invite yourself, and spend the day there. Get to understand what those kids are doing. A lot of it is going to surprise you. They're not as ornery as they often act in school. Some of it won't surprise you at all, because sometimes they are just as ornery in Middle School as they often are in Religious School. You are a gatekeeper in that early teen period; take it terribly seriously.

Just a few words about the other issues. For the last eight years the United Synagogue Department of Education has had representation from the Cantors Assembly. When we held a deliberation about curriculum for the Middle School age group we could not imagine that taking place without several *hazzanim* present. It just wouldn't make sense. It would be like having a discussion about the behavior of a kid on the baseball team and not having the baseball coach present. It would be absurd. We are currently developing a new set of standards for the Synagogue School and so of course we met with members of the Executive Council of the Cantors Assembly. We see *hazzanim* as important partners in the educational endeavor.

I hope that over the next ten years you will continue to bring your individual and collective insights about kids to the floor where it is important to the whole educational program. Your musical knowledge is also essential; kids cannot grow without good music. So bring your knowledge of liturgy and of kids, and be partners in making our synagogues learning communities. You are already partners, and I applaud the role you are playing in helping to make the synagogue a learning community in the broadest sense and not just in its Religious School. Thank you.

Dr. Sheldon Dorph:

I want to tell you about my rabbi and my cantor when I was a kid. Whether they planned it or not, I don't know. But this is how I remember them from my Bar Mitzvah on. Until my Bar Mitzvah I spent most of my time in the principal's office because I got thrown out of class practically every day. For Bar Mitzvah lessons my cantor cut me one of those discs, remember those black discs? I actually saw him cut it when he did it. And my dad used to listen to me because he liked Jewish music, and he liked to hear me practice. And then I would come for Bar Mitzvah lessons with the cantor. The cantor used to call in students one at a time to listen to them.

Behind our little *shul* we had an empty field, and all the kids brought their baseball mitts. There were no Bat Mitzvahs yet at that time, and we older boys -- twelve-and-a-half year olds -- used to play ball out back behind the *shul*. The cantor would go through teaching five or six of the younger kids and all of a sudden the cantor's coming out on the field. Here comes the cantor! Everybody back up, back up, the cantor's going to hit them. And the cantor hit balls to us for twenty minutes. It was really special. Then we came in and had our Bar Mitzvah lessons while the younger kids played ball.

The rabbi in the synagogue was the same age as the cantor. These were two young guys -- twenty-five to thirty, not older -- and on Shabbat the rabbi used to invite

all the kids to *shalosh se'udot*. There we were, a group of teenagers, and the cantor was there too. The rabbi taught us every Shabbat afternoon before *mincha-ma'ariv* and then we stayed for *shalosh se'udot*, about fifteen kids. Out of that group of fifteen teenagers who formed the backbone of our little *shul* came one cantor, five rabbis and two professors of Jewish studies. That's eight Jewish community leaders out of fifteen young people, in the span of about five school years. We were also part of this cantor's teen choir -- and that cantor is here with us today -- Cantor Maurice Weiss.

I once read something about a driving teacher. They asked asked him, "What do you do with the kids that is so special? Why do all the kids love you?" He said, "Well, you know, they mostly know how to drive already, so I don't actually do too much. I correct a couple of minor errors, but basically I talk to them about life, because learning to drive is like learning to live. You've got to know when to put on the breaks, you've got to know when to step on the gas, you've got to know when to look to the left and the right. And we talk about life, and who they're going to be and what they're in the process of becoming. So while they're learning to drive they're also going through this rite of passage, and you know how important that is to a kid.

Well, **Bar Mitzvah** is the same way. **It is a real rite of passage and you people really control it.** And if you don't control it, you're giving up a major opportunity to affect the lives of kids at a critical juncture when they are making decisions about staying in Hebrew schools, staying in Jewish life, doing something more than what they did up to their Bar Mitzvah. So that's one thing I want to throw out at you as a challenge. Stay in touch with those kids. There is no better investment of your time, because that's our future.

The second thing I would like to suggest is that **you are also teachers in your school.** Most rabbis don't find the time to do that. But you -- the teachers -- are the people who put in front of kids the real education in Jewish living. If you don't teach them, don't give them some Jewish music, give them some *nusach*, give them some Jewish content, what will they bring away with them from those classrooms? We all know the problems with Jewish teachers today. They don't know enough. Let's assume they know how to teach, they still need to know more about *Yiddishkeit*. They certainly don't know enough about Jewish music and *nusach*. Begin by teaching the teachers in your school. It will change the whole nature of your relationship to the faculty and the way they see music and the cantor in their school.

Now we come to my specialty. Ramah camps and the synagogue are the two places that kids can really learn about Jewish music and about *nusach* and about *daven'n*. And I would really urge you, when these kids come back from camp, to use them, to spend time with them. After they come back from Ramah they don't know how to fit into congregational life. You're the people they really need to guide them. The rabbi needs to guide them as well, but in many ways, most of the skills they learn in camp are skills that the cantor can best guide them into using back home. Whether it's reading Torah or leading Junior Congregation or creating a Teen Congregation -- whatever it is -- use these kids. Teach them to use what they've learned, even if it's not perfect. I know everyone feels Ramah *nusach* is not the best. It's better than it used to be, but it's still not the best. I'll revisit that in a few minutes. But use these kids when they come back. They are our future leaders. They're going to be able to help you build the congregational youth that you want.

I would like you to think about the Ramah camps as the summer campuses of your synagogues. Please come to visit us, it's not like it used to be. There's room for you to come visit. The Camp Directors will welcome you. Come see your kids in the summer. It's so important. Take a picture with them. Print it in your congregational Bulletin. Please come see your kids in the summer, and see some of the things that we've been doing with the Cantors Institute that can further what I hope is a growing partnership. Some of you may know that we've produced two new songsters, one for Shabbat and one for Weekdays and Israeli songs. They are available to you if you want to use them in your synagogues as we use them in camp. Kids are bringing them home, and the songsters are available from our national office. They were developed in consultation with a cantors committee, headed by Ricki Lippitz, that included three or four other *hazzanim* from the Cantors Assembly. This summer, Ramah Wisconsin produced the first draft of a new booklet for the reading of *Eicha* on Tish'ah B'Av. It includes commentary for young people, and I'm sure it will also work for most of our congregants. You may want to take a look at it. It's coming out this summer and we'll be glad to make it available for use in your synagogues. There's a requirement at JTS Rabbinical School for every rabbi to learn *nusach* before they can graduate. It's only a first step, but already it's been a big help in terms of having more adult Jewish leader-types who know *nusach*. It's one of the reasons we've been able to improve the *nusach* at camp -- especially the Weekday *nusach* -- because most of our kids come with only a little knowledge of Shabbat, they don't know the Weekday *daven'n* by any stretch. But now they're coming home knowing how to lead Weekday *daven'n*, and you'll be able to use that knowledge in your congregations.

It's important to understand that each of the Ramah camps draws from over a hundred synagogues and schools in their area. That means that we do not have a baseline of equal *nusach*-or-trope skills when they arrive. So we try to create that baseline for them. We also need to do Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring, for which we ask them to bring their teaching tapes along. We try to coach them within the framework of *nusach* or trope provided by their own cantor or tutor back home. We work especially hard with kids who are due to become Bar or Bat Mitzvah in the fall. In 1991 we initiated a fellowship program at Ramah for JTS rabbinical students -- which now also includes students of the H. L. Miller School -- and this summer we will have a cantorial fellow at every one of the Ramah camps except California. They will be staying at camp, working in music, *nusach*, trope, service-leading or maybe sports or drama -- whatever they are good in -- but they will add a totally new dimension to the overall program.

There are now over fifty rabbinical, cantorial, social work, and Jewish study students from the Seminary at the Ramah camps. They are a great addition. The cantorial program really has been stimulated by *Hazzan* Rosenbloom, who is the dean of the cantorial School, as you know. But his real claim to fame is he was *s'gan rosh hagan* when I directed the Berkshire camp. So please be aware of what's happening. In the last two or three years *Hazzanim* Jack Chomsky and David Soloff have begun to develop a cantor-in-residence program which is now in full swing at the Wisconsin camp. *Hazzan* Carol Chesler has served in that capacity at Berkshires and we hope to expand that program into stints of two weeks or more. We will do it at every one of the camps because it adds a whole new dimension to both our staff and the program. Jack has also prepared photocopied *nusach* with an accompanying tape of what we've taught

at each of the camps this summer, which will be given to the cantorial students who are working as fellows in each camp.

On a personal note, during the junior year at rabbinical year I teach an Education semester that is now also part of the cantorial school program. And the most important thing about it is that for the first time, during their senior year cantors and rabbis are studying together and learning something about education. My real goal is to continue that partnership out in the field as well, so they can see themselves as real partners in the development of congregation life. *Todah.*

Hazzan Carol Chesler:

It is a great honor for me to be part of this panel. I just want to say I'm very excited because the *Hazzan* I grew up with is sitting right here: Leon Lessik; formerly of St. Louis, now of Teaneck. He was a great influence on my life as a child and taught me for Bat Mitzvah several years ago. I was thinking about this when Jeff called me. Jeff and I are neighbors on Long Island. I'm in Huntingdon and Jeff is in Massapequa, so we're about twenty minutes apart. I've been in Huntingdon, Long Island for two and a half years. Before that, my husband – who is a rabbi – and I shared another congregation on Long Island. It was in a community a bit older than my present one and had fewer B'nai Mitzvah, but more funerals and unveilings. Now I am in a community of about 450 families, and thirty to thirty-five B'nai Mitzvot a year.

When I came to this community it was the only congregation in Huntingdon, and it's conservative. Still, I had to educate the community about what a *hazzan* does. They called Jeff, interestingly enough, to come out and speak to the Professional Development committee on what a *hazzan* does. It seems that for thirty-five years they had a part-time cantor who did B'nai Mitzvah and *daven'n* and that was it. Then he left very abruptly and I came to fill the position, also very abruptly. They didn't know what they – or I – were supposed to do. I insisted that they make me full-time; I could move my family to this part of Long Island and live in this community – which is not a cheap place to live – for a part-time job.

And so they made me a full-time cantor and started looking for ways to substantiate the salary. What are we going to give her to do? Let's get her to teach *Gimel* class in the religious school, and I said no. But they did give me five hours a week of teaching in the nursery school, and I became the sum total of Jewish music for 200 two-to-four year olds. Every week I taught them Shabbat music. I led Tot Shabbat five times a winter and taught everything from *I've Been Working on the Railroad* to *Dayeinu*. I also put in two or three hours a week in the Religious School teaching Jewish Music to the upper graders and Torah Trope to the sixth graders. I prepared them all for their Shabbatons in the spring when each grade would lead the entire service on Friday night and Shabbat morning. I taught them how to do their Model Seders, their *Yom Hasho'ah* services, and I led assemblies for the entire Religious School – and this was just the “kid” part of my job. I'm not even counting the hours I spend teaching individual B'nai-and-B'not Mitzvah, teaching Adult Education classes, leading services, visiting people in the hospital, taking part in funerals, making Shiva calls, and all the other things that go into a full-time position.

Last summer I went to Ramah last summer for the first time, I was the first cantor-in-residence at the Berkshires camp. I worked with a lot of my own students up

there as well as with campers from dozens of other congregations. It was a broadening experience for me and for them. Eliot mentioned the fact that the staff at Ramah also works with Torah readers. At Berkshires we discussed the possibility of keeping our teenagers involved past their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The most disheartening thing about the survey that Eliot mentioned was that the post-Bar Mitzvah/Pre-College generation seems to have gotten lost. After their Bar/Bat Mitzvah something happened to those children – they became teenagers. In my synagogue we don't have USY. There's a program for pre-teens, and it's great. But when they get past Bar/Bat Mitzvah and enter their teens, there's nothing. So what way is there for them to stay involved in my shul? They come back and they read Torah now and again when there's no Bar Mitzvah. We don't want the Bar Mitzvah child to lose the limelight. But **once the teenagers came back to read Torah, I knew I had them.**

I stole my program-idea from Rabbi Gershon Schwartz, who used to be at South Baldwin and is now in Elkins Park. He created a program called **TROP: Torah Readers are Outstanding People**, and I followed his formula. Post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah kids come back and read small, easily learnable portions of Torah. At first I had the grandiose idea that they would do a full *parsha*, but that was ridiculous. But no matter how little they commit themselves to read, it means giving more of your time, having rehearsals with them, preparing the readings yourself in case of emergency. They all got a letter to come back on the seventh day of Pesach and be honored from the Bimah, they would be recognized and those who had read torah at least three times during the year would get a certificate.

So much of my synagogue time is invested in education that the congregation no longer has to substantiate my salary. Jeff Myers told them all the great things that a full-time *hazzan* does and I'm doing all of them, and then some. I'm also happy I got to attend CAJE at Hofstra University last summer -- with the entire faculty of my Religious School -- and it was paid for by the synagogue's Sisterhood. They sent every teacher -- including me -- to CAJE, and it was fabulous. I took back so much practical information from the experience. I also attended a class last year on teaching Learning Disabled kids. It was sponsored by the New York Board of Jewish Education and I was the only *hazzan* in that room of forty women, all gabbing in Hebrew. They were all Israeli day school teachers and I thought I was in the wrong place when I walked in the door. I learned about teaching Learning Disabled kids because I have a good number of them among my Bar/Bat Mitzvah students.

The highlights of my year were going to CAJE and I going to Ramah, and this summer I'm going back to Ramah. In the little microcosm of my synagogue I'm branching out to the world at large. I'm even involved in the Huntingdon Clergy Association. This is where I see our profession headed-- it's implicit in the title of cantor, and its part of the job. Thank you.

Hazzan Jeffrey Myers:

I've been a *hazzan* and educational director for seventeen years, and we finally formed a professional network the other day, a la the CAJE model. There are ten of us in the Cantors Assembly who serve full time as *Hazzanim* and Educational Directors. It's a unique situation that most of you will probably never experience in your careers. Yet there's a certain strength that we bring to the cantorial profession because of our

having served in both capacities, and I'd like to share some of that strength with you, if you'll permit me to digress for a moment.

As Bob Abramson mentioned earlier, I was honored to serve on the national deliberation team for the new Middle School curriculum for the conservative movement. One of the writers of that curriculum is our own Marcy Wagner who is here, sitting in the back. Marcy, I just wanted to let you know personally how proud I was as a *hazzan* that you were one of the writers. You have been doing a wonderful job and will continue to do so, and I want to share the *nachas* I feel with our fellow *hazzanim*; you are providing a marvelous example for all of us.

Three specific items came to me as I listened to the presentations of our esteemed panelists. Eliot reflected on the cantor as role model for our kids. Bob compared the *hazzan's* influence to that of a sports coach, and Shelley pointed out that we as accessible role models are perfectly positioned to teach the teachers in our Religious School – by example -- how to guide children through this critical rite of passage in their life. Now I ask you this. How many of you have ever taken your educational director out to lunch to discuss “where are we going with this building?” You're part of the team. Your role in the institution is critical to the success of Judaism. One of the important people you need to connect with is the educational director. You have specific goals of which you'd like to see the young people in your building attain ten years from now. You need to take the time to find out where the educational director hopes they will be, so the two of you can create a vision of where you both want them to be.

How do your particular skills fit into your institution? Each of you here today brings something different to the table. No two *hazzanim* in this room are the same. What skill do you have that you can share with your educational institution? To answer the question you need to think beyond the simple scope of Bar and Bat Mitzvah and beyond the simple scope of Sunday School music; there are many, many areas outside your normal routine where you might excel. You need to look at all of them.

Many of you, I have no doubt, are intimidated by teaching. Be it in the front of the classroom, be it sitting in some informal setting, whatever the occasion may be. That doesn't excuse you from not **learning how to become a teacher**. There are many ways to go about it. You can speak to the educational director in your institution, you can connect with any of the nearby colleges that have Teachers programs and get an advanced degree in Education – because even though you may not have the term “Rabbi” (which means teacher) at the end of your title – that doesn't excuse you from being the best you can be. And if you don't yet have the skills, go out and learn them. **Education is not just a pediatric project, it's life-long!**

Life-long learning is going to become the new buzz word, beyond Family Education, which is finally quieting down. Life-long learning means you need to be involved with different groups, from age four to 104, because people will be living that long. You need to acquire the skills to be able to handle not just the teens, but the post-teens, the adults in the community – meaning young parents to empty nesters to seniors – each requiring a wide range of skills. You need to know who the group is, how to best effectively deal with them, how to teach all of them. So if you feel intimidated by that prospect--and who wouldn't--do something about it! The more you inject yourself into the life of your community, the more of a community you're going to create, and the more people will see what you're bringing to them. That is the role of a *hazzan*.

Question from the floor:

How do we work together? For instance, how can we get the schools to say, "We need to have a cantor on our faculty?" How do we get every Ramah camp to say, "This Wisconsin program, we should be doing it in Ohio and in the Poconos"? How do we say to CAJE, "We have to get more cantors involved, and in more visible places than just the one Cantors concert"? How do we work together to build the kind of programs we want?

Dr. Spack:

To the best of my knowledge, people who want to participate in CAJE are welcomed. We are in an age where we're all seeing the reduction of volunteerism, so it's not as if we're seeing lines of people who want to be dragged into the planning process. And yet, we could not orchestrate this magnificent, comprehensive conference every year with 700 sessions and 2,500 participants if it were not for the thousands of hours that people contributed. And that includes *hazzanim* every year. So, we invite you to be a part of it. What you can help us do is to get word out that cantors are welcome in that community. There is no gate keeping, there is no process of review of credentials that precludes the participation of those who have the will to participate. So, from our vantage point, the more the merrier.

Another answer to the question:

Put your two cents in, get involved. I chose to get involved in CAJE last year because I wanted to be. I'm on the Education commission of the Conservative Movement because I wanted to be involved. I worked in Camp Ramah Nyack for many years because I wanted to do that. So the answer, from my perspective, is to get involved. Don't sit back and wait for an invitation.

Question from the floor:

The issue I want to underline is the statement that Bob made and that Sheldon really stressed to you. I think cantors now understood that their involvement with Ramah is a critical piece of the puzzle, and it will only fall into place when more of their colleagues are willing to get involved. Shelley and the individual camp directors are all eager to have *hazzanim* working on staff. I think that **we need to have a similar input with the Schechter schools, to the point where every person who leads Tefillah in a Schechter school is a cantor**, and not secular Israelis who are well-meaning and fine Hebrew teachers, but far removed from religion. As long as the status quo prevails there will never be meaningful *Tefillah* in our Day Schools.

Dr. Abramson:

I'd like to address that last point about our Schechter schools. They all have music programs. They all have *Tefillot* regularly. They all need the skills of *hazzanim*. A lot of it depends on how one packages and a lot of it depends on how one packages the program. And it depends on what skills you're really bringing to the table. The

larger schools can take on the responsibility the way we did in Detroit: teaching trope. Other schools can't take it on because local synagogues in their communities may be jealously guarding that responsibility. Still, some of our more established Day Schools may employ several people just to teach trope. So **there is always the potential for hazzanim to work within the Schechter network!** It depends on how one is going to present oneself and whether one is going to choose to fit in or to demand that the school recast itself.

Comment from the floor:

My name is Michal Lissek. In the late 1970s we were at Ramah in Wisconsin for three summers. I taught Hebrew during the two months I was there with our kids, and Leon came up for one month to teach synagogue skills and *daven'n*. At the time, Leon was extremely frustrated when he saw the type of *daven'n* that was going on. Most of the *roshei eidot* guarded their own territory and really weren't interested in taking advice. It was a rough summer, very frustrating for Leon. But David Soloff, the director, was extremely receptive. He and Leon had many, many phone conversations and David -- as I said -- was receptive. When I heard what's going on now, thanks to Jack Chomsky's initiative, with your involvement and with what Shelley Dorph laid out, I was really surprised because I hadn't been involved back then, and certainly not since Leon retired. I'm very happy to hear that a lot of the things that Leon was suggesting to David Soloff -- and I'm sure a lot of other *hazzanim* were telling him -- have been put into practice. I remember David telling Leon, "You can't just come in during the summer and teach *daven'n*." But now it looks like it really is happening. And I think that is in large part due to *Hazzan* Henry Rosenblum, Dean of the H. L. Miller Cantorial School, who's been a prime mover in all of this.

Dr. Spack:

Please understand that all of these relationships are idiosyncratic. Sometimes we try, and the *shiduch* cannot be made. We have to be patient about that. The final comment that I'd like to make today is that I'd like us to raise our eyes a little to really have some vision. I challenge the members of our panel, I challenge the Assembly, to imagine a world in which there was a professional *hazzan* on the staff of every one of the agencies represented here today. I'm not sure I can find the spot for it at CAJE, with all the work that's been done by committed volunteers, by *hazzanim* who are full-time professionals in their own congregations but may have experience in these areas. What if there were a funded, full-time position in developing the *musach* curriculum, the *Tefillah* curriculum, the spiritual curriculum of the Solomon Schechter Day Schools and the Ramah Camps? Maybe it would involve two separate positions, or maybe they could be combined. This is a question I don't think we should even attempt to answer today. Let's just imagine it! And then let's see if within the next two or three years we might be able to bring something like that to pass, and what a great celebration we'll have five years from today. Thank you.